THE BEST KILLS OF 2022

MEGAN IS THE MOMENT

FANGORIA®

VOL 2 #18

MONSTERS • ALIENS • BIZARRE CREATURES

THE UNTOLD STORY OF HORROR'S GREATEST TRAILER

Leatherface

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III

BEST KILLS OF 2022

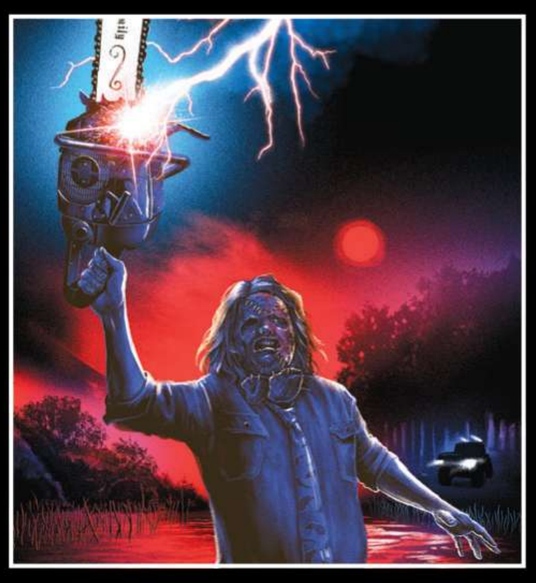
JUNJI ITO: ARTIST, ICON, *MANIAC*

FANGORIA®

VOL 2 #18

MONST RE CREATURES

***COCAINE BEAR* GOES ON A TEAR**



IS THIS THE GREATEST TRAILER EVER MADE?

***KIDS VS ALIENS*: CANADIAN GRUDGE MATCH**

M3GAN

IS THE MOMENT

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THE

BREAKOUT STAR OF 2023

FANGORIA Nº 366 ▽|JAN|▽|23|▽|012023|

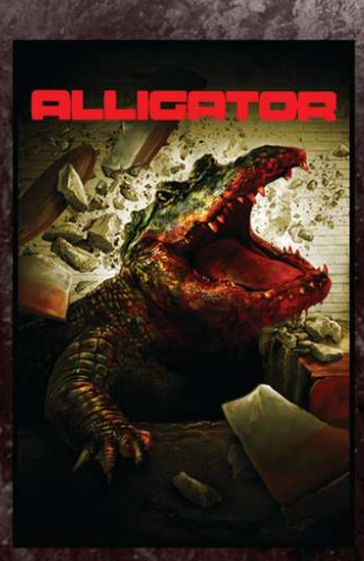
FANGORIA Nº 366 ▽|JAN|▽|23|▽|012023|

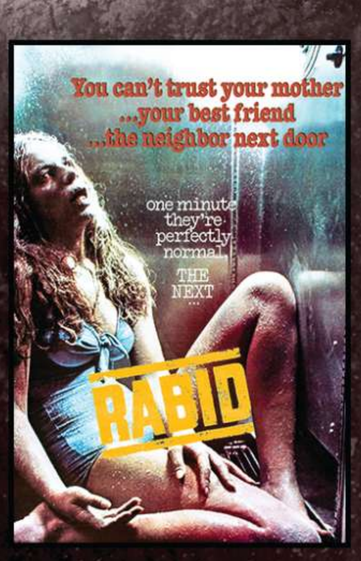
FANGORIA Nº 366 ▽|JAN|▽|23|▽|012023|

FANGORIA Nº 366 ▽|JAN|▽|23|▽|012023|

WATCH NOW ... IF YOU DARE!

SCREAM™ FACTORY TV





SCREAMFACTORYTV.COM

JOIN THE CONVERSATION
@SCREAMFACTORYTV

JANUARY 2023

FANGORIA

VOL 2
#18

GUTS

18 **THE BEST DEATHS IN HORROR: 2022** *Matt Donato*

23 ***KIDS VS ALIENS*: NEW GATEWAY HORROR TOUCHES DOWN** *Brett Gallman*

26 **MAKING *M3GAN* MOVE** *Britt Hayes*

31 ***M3GAN*: ALLISON WILLIAMS' HORROR TRIF3CTA** *Britt Hayes*

36 **THE MEXICAN MOTHER HORROR OF *HUESERA: THE BONE WOMAN*** *Michael Gingold*

40 **REPORT: *THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE CHILDREN*** *Brett Gallman*

44 **INSIDE THE *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III* TRAILER** *Amanda Reyes*

50 **TEN GHOULISH TRAILERS** *Gary Pullin*

52 **INTERVIEW: ELIZABETH BANKS GETS HIGH ON *COCAINE BEAR*** *Phil Nobile Jr.*

58 ***SORRY ABOUT THE DEMON*: EMILY HAGINS GROWS UP** *Ryan Scott*

61 **A VISIT TO *KNOCK AT THE CABIN*** *Paul Tremblay*

64 **A HISTORY OF DOLLHOUSE HORROR** *Meredith Borders*

69 **GREG CANNOM REVISITS *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*** *Ve Neill*

74 **JUNJI ITO: ARTIST, ICON, *MANIAC*** *Jenny Nulf*

78 **THE GROWTH OF PLANT HORROR** *Richard Newby*

84 **THAT TIME JOHN BELUSHI PLAYED GODZILLA** *Michael Gingold*

86 **SPOILERS & SPLATTER: *HALLOWEEN ENDS*** *Christopher Nelson*

92 ***MY BLOODY VALENTINE* GETS MINED FOR A NOVELIZATION** *Brian Collins*

GRAVY

4 **INVOCATION** *Phil Nobile Jr.*

5 **THE POSTAL ZONE**

6 **MONSTER INVASION** *Michael Gingold*

10 **EXORDIUM** *Michael Gingold*

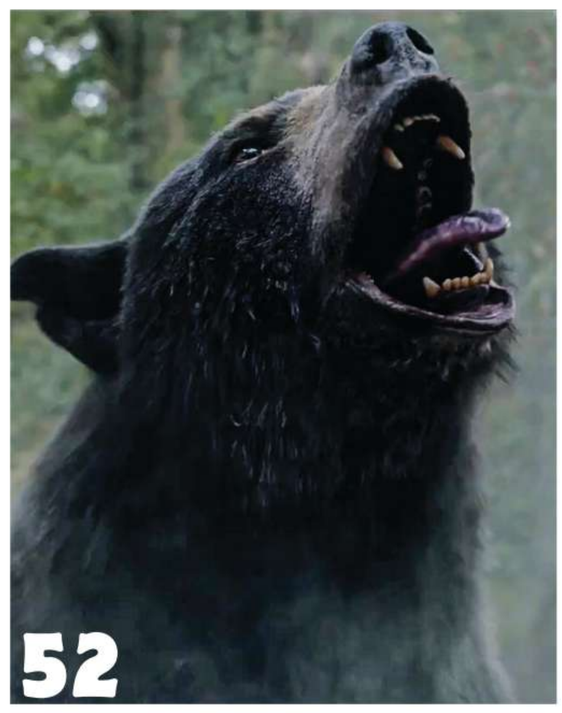
12 **SCENE QUEEN** *Barbara Crampton*

14 **SLASHER NATION** *Stephen Graham Jones*

90 **THE KINGCAST: DARABONT AND HOPE** *Eric Vespe*

96 **NIGHTMARE LIBRARY** *Ahlissa Eichhorn*

98 **CLASSIFIED AD VAULT/ THINGS TO COME**



ON OUR COVER: (SUBSCRIBER VARIANT) *LEATHERFACE: TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III* ILLUSTRATION BY GARY PULLIN // (NEWSTAND VARIANT) *M3GAN* PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

FANGORIA

JANUARY 2023
VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 18

Publishers
Tara Ansley & Abhi Goel

Editor-in-Chief
Phil Nobile Jr.

Creative Director
Jason Kauzlarich

Operations Manager
Jimmy Shaw

Digital Editor
Angel Melanson

Senior Contributing Editor
Meredith Borders

Contributing Editors
Scott Wampler
Blayne Waterloo

VP of Ad Sales
Marisa Mirabal

Contributors
Brian Collins
Barbara Crampton
Matt Donato
Ahlissa Eichhorn
Brett Gallman
Michael Gingold
Britt Hayes
Stephen Graham Jones
Ve Neill
Christopher Nelson
Richard Newby
Jenny Nulf
Gary Pullin
Amanda Reyes
Ryan Scott
Paul Tremblay
Eric Vespe

Special Thanks
Armen Aghaeian
Lauren Bantit
Jeff Burr
Makiko Hara
Melissa Kay
Takashi Kogure
Yasumasa Kutami
Kevin Nicklaus
Melissa Ramirez Ordonez
Mark Phillips
David J. Schow
Damion Stene
Newell Todd
Katrina Wan
Tsubasa Yamaguchi

This issue is dedicated to Laney Chantal, Ted White and Jim Winburn.

© 2023 by FANGORIA Publishing, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior written permission. Printed in the U.S.A. To learn how we collect and use your information, visit the privacy link at FANGORIA.com. FANGORIA magazine is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October. This is Issue #18 of Volume 2 (ISSN 0164-2111). To learn more about subscriptions, please visit us at www.FANGORIA.com or email subscriptions@FANGORIA.com. For all other inquiries, please email info@FANGORIA.com. FANGORIA accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photos, arts, or other materials, but we do consider freelance pitches via email at editorial@FANGORIA.com.

ALL UNCREDITED PHOTOS FROM FANGORIA VAULT

INVOCATION

Mission: Accomplished

Putting Leatherface on the front of Fango should have been easier.

In the five years I've been editing this mag, we've published 18 issues and 26 covers. Surely I could have come up with some reason to put the iconic cannibal slasher from one of my favorite films of all time on the cover?

It wasn't as simple as you'd think. One of the early rules we set for ourselves when we relaunched FANGORIA in 2018 was that we are not a nostalgia magazine. If we covered older films, we had to do it from a new angle; we had to have something new to say. And, well, finding something new to say about *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* 45+ years later was no easy task.

In Vol. 2 #1, we published a genuine archaeological find: early written attempts at a sequel, with some treatments dated 1975. I'm still super proud of that discovery, and we commissioned Gary Pullin to do a beautiful portrait of the house. The story wasn't quite cover material – it made the filmstrip! – but I mention it here to prove how long this itch has been going.

Last year's franchise entry (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) would have been an ideal reason to make Leatherface a Fango cover model once more. All it would have taken was an answered email from its publicists! But Netflix moves in mysterious ways, and we didn't even get a premiere date until mere weeks before the film debuted – and that quarter's issue was already off to the printer. No *Chainsaw* coverage for us!

The upcoming video game was not only an opportunity for a cover story; it WAS a cover story. I commissioned the article. I even saw the digital family portrait that Gun Media had prepared especially for our cover. It was beautiful! But the game's production schedule worked against us, and after kicking it down the road for nearly a year, it did not come to pass. We did, however, publish the piece that was meant to accompany that game coverage: Brian Collins' analytical look at the various interpretations of the character over the years, with a beautiful painting by Chantal Handley to go with it.

Eventually, we decided to stop waiting for the moment, and created it ourselves. I took to Twitter (RIP?) and said I wanted to know the story behind the infamous "Excalibur" trailer that promoted *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* back in 1989. How did that bizarre moment in marketing come to pass?? Amanda Reyes answered the call and delivered, digging up new details and images for your (and let's be honest, my) exclusive enjoyment. To commemorate the find, we tapped Mr. Pullin once more to provide a glorious image for the subscriber cover. (If you're reading the newsstand edition with the *M3GAN* cover, rest easy: Gary has provided a color variant for the article itself, and it's every bit as stunning as his cover version.)

So as we head into 2023, into my fifth year editing this magazine, I'm basking in the satisfaction of this particular scratched itch, and I'm feeling good that we held to our rule of only bringing you the old stuff if we have something new to say. When you keep your word, it feels good on both sides of the transaction; here's to another year (or five) of keeping our promises.

Phil Nobile Jr., Editor-in-Chief

The Postal Zone

People are always asking us how they can have their writing published in FANGORIA. Here you go!
This is your space to get heard, get loud and get opinionated. Brevity is preferred; having a point of view is required.
Hit us up at **MAIL@FANGORIA.COM**

HOW *HALLOWEEN ENDS* ENDS

While many have complained about the minimal amount of screen time between Laurie and Michael in *Halloween Ends*, I can't help but point out that they're overlooking one of the most pivotal moments of the entire franchise. (Spoilers follow, obviously)

By now every fan knows that Laurie finally kills Michael, but not many seem to appreciate the manner in which she does it. Laurie, who has been a victim of The Shape for most of her life, and who's lost nearly every single person she has ever loved because of him, finally gets the opportunity for revenge, Michael's hands pinned down with butcher knives and a refrigerator to the legs.

The Boogeyman is now weak and helpless, unable to escape. Laurie is free to make him feel every ounce of pain and suffering he's inflicted upon her for so many years… but that's not what she does. She gently slits his wrist while holding his hand, whispering the words "it's okay" as he takes his final breaths.

In a moment where she could've shown him the same level of cruelty and viciousness that he inflicted on her and others, she maintains her humanity by giving him the kind of merciful death that he was incapable of giving his victims. In that moment, Laurie overcomes the Boogeyman by not succumbing to evil, as Corey did. THAT is what I think the central message of this movie really is, and I love that.

- Carl J Gerber

Well said, Carl. We are on record as fans of the unexpected pivots Halloween Ends *took, but you've pointed out one that was pretty much lost in the Corey Cunningham of it all.- PN*

IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO RESURRECT *RESURRECTION*

My vote for the overlooked best film of 2022 goes to *Resurrection*. Rebecca Hall gives a powerhouse performance (that monologue!) and Tim Roth oozes with creep factor every time he's on screen. Stumbling onto this while browsing Shudder felt like picking up a box with cool cover art at the video store and discovering a hidden gem.

- Kevin Watts

Agreed, Kevin.
(Though we can't cop to the "overlooked" part - we covered Resurrection *in issue 16!) - PN*

NOT ALONE ON *ALONE WITH YOU*

Alone with You is unequivocally my favorite horror film of the year. It's emotionally pulverizing in the way it captures mental anguish. Emily Bennett, co-writer and co-director with Justin Brooks, delivers a star-making performance as Charlene, a young woman who spirals out of control when she perceives she's been locked in her apartment. The walls seem to crush down on her, adding to the claustrophobic nature of the film. It's one of those films that I connect with so deeply that it's like looking in a mirror. I've been there too many days to count. *Alone with You* deserves major hardware.

- Bee Delores

We're with you, Bee - and we can't wait to see what Emily and Justin are cooking up next. (And by the time you read this, the nominations for the 2023 Chainsaw Awards will be live, so hopefully your fave will be up for some reader-voted glory.) - PN

WANTED! MORE READERS LIKE:

Thanks to Mark Phillips of Nightmares Unlimited for providing this beautiful reference model for Gary Pullin's Leatherface art in this issue. See what Mark's up to on IG at nightmares_unlimited.

MONSTER INVASION

ATTACHMENT

By Michael Gingold

FILMMAKERS FIND SUPERNATURAL CHILLS IN THE CINEMATICALLY UNTAPPED SHADOWS OF JUDAISM.

While Catholicism and its tenets have provided the basis for countless horror films throughout the genre's history, the Jewish religion and mysticism have not been explored nearly as often. One of the very first movie monsters was the Golem, showcased in a trio of movies between 1915-1920 by filmmaker Paul Wegener, and writer/director Keith Thomas more recently mined one tradition for serious chills in *The Vigil*, but the limited number of scary movies incorporating Judaism have tended to use it as window dressing for standard possession pictures.

A new and notable exception is *Attachment*, premiering on Shudder in February following acclaimed festival play. Writer/director Gabriel Bier Gislason's film uses Jewish culture and mythology to underpin and complement its genre trappings in meaningful ways, while also succeeding as both an attractive love story and an absorbing domestic drama. Maja (Josephine Park), who's been living off her past fame as a child actress in Denmark, meets Leah (Ellie Kendrick), a Jewish grad student of partial Danish heritage, and the two immediately hit it off. When Leah suffers a mysterious seizure that breaks her leg, Maja feels compelled to accompany her back to London — and into the house Leah shares with her overbearing Orthodox mother Chana (Sofie Gråbøl). Chana's obsessive approach to

KEEPING THE PEACE: LEV (DAVID DENCIK) QUELLS TENSIONS BETWEEN MAJA (JOSEPHINE PARK, ALSO SEEN ABOVE) AND CHANA (SOFIE GRÅBØL).

caring for the ailing Leah causes increasing alarm for Maja, who begins to suspect occult forces at work in the home as well.

Gislason, the son of award-winning director Susanne Bier (*Bird Box*), is a longtime horror fan who originally aimed to take a more irreverent approach to a fright film based on his faith. "I grew up watching all these horror movies that drew on Christian dogma and liturgy, but in a way where you could tell they were having fun with it. I wanted to see someone do that with Judaism, because I'm Jewish and there's this rich mythology to draw on, and no one had done it. But I had no real idea to tack that interest onto. Then Josephine and I, who have been friends since high school, went out drinking several years ago, and she told me this story about how she and an ex-girlfriend wound up having to stay with the ex-girlfriend's mom. I'm not going to get into the specifics of the stories, but they were really funny and wild, and I was like, 'I should write a movie for you based on that.'

"That idea banged around in my head for a while, and I was trying to figure out what to do with it, and then that started overlapping with my desire to make some kind of irreverent Jewish horror movie. I started thinking about the trope of the domineering Jewish mother, and whether there was a way to play with that and subvert it a bit. Somehow the ideas merged, and the specifics of Josephine's stories fell away, but the framework of having three people with those relations in a house together, and building this Jewish world around it, started to add up for me."

The resulting movie takes a more serious and sober approach to its horror trappings than originally intended, though there is some humor in early scenes where Maja, attempting to learn more about Leah's way of life, seeks advice from a Jewish bookstore owner (David Dencik) who turns out to be Leah's uncle. Gislason was also determined to get past the aforementioned Jewish-mother conventions and create a more complex character with Chana.

"Much of that," he explains, "had to do with not talking about it too much in the specific terms of what a Jewish mother is like, because I feel then you could fall easily into the trap of [using those clichés]. At a certain point, Sofie and I talked a lot about Judaism in terms of what it means in her character's life, and the circumstances it brought about. In terms of the way it affects Chana's relationship with Leah, I feel like we steered away from addressing it in terms of those stereotypes, and instead talked very specifically about what this relationship is like, how it got to this point, and when certain things happened that made Chana be the way she is. So it became a far more circumstantial

ATTACHMENT JOINS THE CANON OF "THERE'S SOMETHING OFF ABOUT MY PARTNER'S MOM" HORROR.

"I started thinking about the trope of the domineering Jewish mother, and whether there was a way to subvert it a bit."

- Gabriel Bier Gislason

PHOTOS BY SOREN KIRKEGAARD / COURTESY OF SHUDDER

thing than it was a cultural referential thing."

As a result of this attention to character, *Attachment* showcases relationships and conflicts that could have easily held the attention through the entire movie without the introduction of the supernatural elements. Gislason introduces them gradually, slowly building a sense of dread that finds full flower in the third act, and he notes that this genre-blending and slow burn were his goals from the beginning.

"I knew I wanted to make a horror film, because it's the genre I love — but one of the things I love about it is how plastic it is, how bendable it is. In many of my favorite horror movies, those elements are not necessarily front and center; they sneak up on you, or the movie builds slowly toward them. That's what I wanted to try with *Attachment*. To me, it's first and foremost a love story, with many layers, and I thought that not only would it be a fun exercise to see how many tones I could apply, but because it was a love story, I felt like it needed that. Like, the opening wouldn't work if I played it as a drama, because it had to feel light and fun and romantic. The second act obviously wouldn't work if I played it that way, though; that part of the story required it to become darker, more psychological and spooky. And for it to go to the extreme places I wanted it to near the end, I knew I had to fully commit to the genre that would allow that. It is still capacious enough to be a love story, even if it dips into other genres along the way."

Gislason and his team shot *Attachment* in just 23 days, and he points out, "Those were Danish shooting days. American shooting days are usually 12 hours; ours were eight, so it was the equivalent of 16 or 17 American shooting days." Due to COVID and budgetary restrictions, almost the entire movie was lensed in Denmark, with just two days of London exteriors — and there was one major hiccup involving the house they had secured to stand in for Leah and Chana's home.

"Two and a half weeks before we went into production, we got a call from the homeowner, saying that she'd only just discovered that this was a horror movie, and we now could not shoot there because she was worried – and this is true – that we would curse her house! I then promptly went to her home and cursed it [*laughs*], but we were screwed, and we had to build the whole London house on a stage. Our amazing production design team [led by Kristina Kovacs] built the whole thing in two and a half weeks with no money. It is a credit to them, and to the camera and lighting department; it was remarkable. The first day on that set, they were still covering up holes in the boards because they hadn't had a chance to wallpaper everything yet. It was bananas, but no one's been able to tell so far!" 💀

TO SAY LEAH (ELLIE KENDRICK) HAS "OVERBEARING JEWISH MOTHER BLUES" WOULD BE AS UNDERSTATED AS THESE PHOTOS THE STUDIO SENT.

PHOTOS BY SOREN KIRKEGAARD / COURTESY OF SHUDDER

NEW!

Chavant™ alien CLAY™

FOR PRECISION MODELING

10 EASY to REMOVE WEDGES

NET WT. 4.75 lbs. (2.15 kg)

SULFUR FREE | CONSISTENT QUALITY
LOW TACK FEEL | SILICONE FRIENDLY
CASTABLE | CAN BE MELTED & REMELTED

Alien Clay™ is a precision sculpting medium used for a variety of sculpting and fabrication applications. It is one of the most versatile clays available (sculpt, brush on, trowel on or pour) allowing for quick build-up and sculpting perfect detail. Use for sculpting finely detailed miniatures or life-size sculptures.

HEAT RESISTANT

Reusable Storage Container

STORE | MELT | POUR

The *Alien Clay*™ container is specially designed for storing, melting and pouring the clay. It has two hand holds and pour spouts to allow you to pour liquified clay directly from the container.

More Info:
ALIENCLAY.COM
CHAVANT.COM

PREVIOUSLY ON...

FANGORIA PRESENTS

A Stephen King Podcast For Stephen King Obsessives

THE KINGCAST

Elijah Wood

Issa Lopez

Katie Siegel

Mick Garris

Hosted by Scott Wampler and Eric Vespe

Proudly Hosted By The FANGORIA Podcast Network

NEW EPISODES EVERY WEDNESDAY,
WHEREVER PODCASTS CAN BE FOUND.

Rian Johnson

Guillermo del Toro

Stephen King

Bryan Fuller

Mike Flanagan

@Kingcast19

Won't Someone Think of the Children??

What must a movie promotion contain to get people outraged? Apparently, not a murderous Santa Claus anymore. As I write this, Tommy Wirkola's *Violent Night* has yet to be released, but the trailer, in which David Harbour's Santa stabs, bludgeons and blows up a bunch of people in full red-band glory, has amassed 31 million views on YouTube and has played elsewhere all over the web. And to my knowledge, no parental group or anyone else has gone ballistic over its depiction of the Christmas icon indulging in bloody, explosive mayhem.

It's a far cry from 1984, when the promotional campaign for *Silent Night, Deadly Night*, its TV commercial in particular, spurred angry moms, dads, and other concerned grown-ups to protest the release and picket theaters. How dare the jolly old red-suited guy be turned into an agent of mayhem, cried everyone from Siskel and Ebert to Phil Donahue to Mickey Rooney. Now, granted, *Violent Night*'s Santa only kills bad people while the maniac who dons his garb in *Silent Night* went after innocent victims, but still, the little ones most likely to be potentially traumatized by images of a killer Kringle wouldn't recognize that distinction. And *Violent Night*'s death dealer is specifically identified as the real St. Nick in that preview, whereas the *Silent Night* TV spot that sparked all the controversy had to have the line "He only *looks* like Santa Claus" added to its narration before the MPAA would approve it for broadcast.

So what has changed? You could simply point to the fact that in the Internet/digital age, violent entertainment has become much more accessible to, and is consumed far more frequently by, younger viewers, and that parents have become more permissive about letting their kids enjoy the gruesome and horrific. Certainly, whenever I go to a horror convention, there are always a number of little boys and girls dressed as Jason, Michael Myers, Chucky and his Bride, et al. running around, when there were barely any kids at the shows I attended back in the '80s and early '90s. You could also argue that with so many real-world issues affecting children these days, there are more important things to protest on their behalf than a scary movie ad.

Yet even today, that's not entirely the case. Earlier this year, the New Zealand division of Universal Pictures withdrew its television ad for *The Black Phone* after numerous parents complained about its frightening content to the country's Advertising Standards Authority.

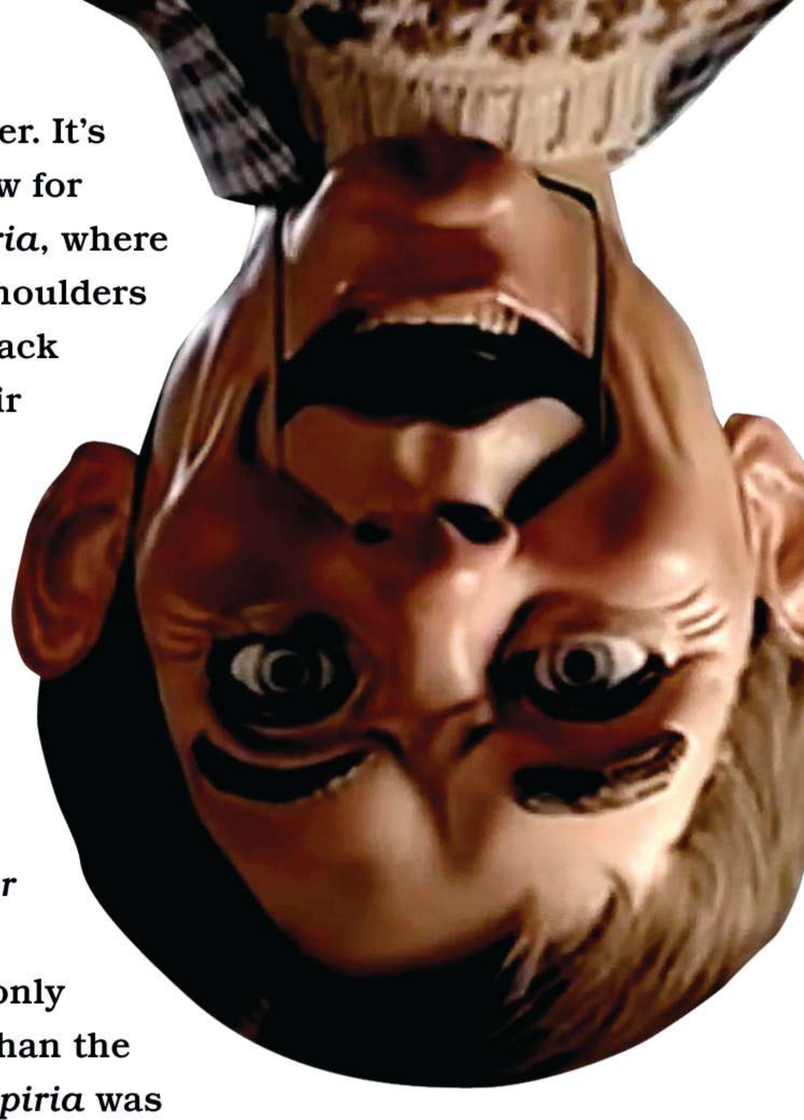
SCARRED FOR LIFE: TRAILERS FOR *SUSPIRIA*, *MAGIC* AND *SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT* SCRAMBLED THE SOULS OF A GENERATION.

"I understand advertising for movies like this later on in the evening but so early when young children are still awake is horrible," one viewer said. This was pretty much the same concern at the forefront of the *Silent Night* protests: that its commercial had aired during afternoon programs when kids could easily see it.

The *Black Phone* situation, however, points up the differences in how media is consumed today. As reported by *The New Zealand Herald*, local broadcaster TVNZ had cleared the ad to play on TV only after 8 p.m., and noted that the upset parents and kids, who saw it between 6 and 8 p.m., must have viewed it via their live-streaming and on-demand platforms, which target content based on user profiles. The lesson, according to the ASA, was that children can witness potentially objectionable material through adult accounts. Of course, the issue there is that parents need to keep an eye on what their kids are watching, though the board added, "The negative reaction of viewing the images in the trailer was not something that could easily be mitigated by a parent's or caregiver's presence."

And so the debate continues, even as the objects of contention change. At the heart of it, though, is the subject of choice: Both the *Silent Night, Deadly Night* and *Black Phone* previews provoked parental ire because they were inflicted, in a sense, on youngsters innocently watching football games and other benign shows. They didn't seek out those frightening images, but were exposed to them anyway. And this issue has arisen without any "Think of the children!" concerns: in 2018, YouTube banned an autoplay ad for *The Nun* that would appear on users' screens and trick them into raising the volume, only for the title character to suddenly pop up with an unearthly scream. The channel nixed this promo for "violat[ing] our shocking content policy," even though it hosts numerous similar "screamer" videos — except those have to be consciously clicked on.

Even as a teenager back in '84, I wondered if *Silent Night* would have stirred up such anger if its advertising had been restricted to those hours when preteens were unlikely to see it. And I thought back to the horror movie TV spots that had been *kindertraumas* for me when I was a younger child, but never raised any parental eyebrows — at least, enough to spur them to action. There are three of those commercials that I especially remember giving me the heebie-jeebies, and the best-known one was also part of the movie's theatrical trailer. It's the now-classic preview for Dario Argento's *Suspiria*, where we see the head and shoulders of a woman from the back as she brushes her hair and intones, "Roses are red, violets are blue, but the iris is the flower…" And then as she shrieks the final line, "…that will mean the end of *youuuuu!*" she turns around and *omigod her head is a skull!* Never mind the first 92; the only thing more terrifying than the last 12 minutes of *Suspiria* was that damn TV promo.



A rhyme was also the key component of the less aggressive but just as chilling commercial for Richard Attenborough's *Magic*. This one, like *Silent Night*, took something intended to give children joy — a ventriloquist's dummy — and perverted it into an object of pure fear. It's a slow zoom on "Fats" against a black background as he recites:

Abracadabra, I sit on his knee
Presto chango, and now he is me!
Hocus pocus, we take her to bed
Magic is fun! We're dead

On that last line, he sneers and his eyes roll back, and by then it was too late to change the channel and bad dreams later that night were pretty much assured.

Then there was the TV ad for the less well-known 1976 pseudodocumentary *Sasquatch*. It begins with the camera watching through a stand of trees as a little Native American boy plays in a clearing deep in a forest. The boy approaches the edge of the clearing, the camera moves into a position above him, looking down at the boy… and then a big hairy foot enters the frame, the boy looks up in terror and (*shiver*) we realize we're looking through Sasquatch's eyes as the camera begins chasing him, an unearthly howl on the soundtrack. Man, did that one scare me every time it came on the air. I only caught *Sasquatch* years later on video and found it pretty dull and uneventful, with that chilling bit nowhere to be seen — and I only found out years after that that the scene was part of a segment that was cut from the film shortly after it began its theatrical release. (It was ultimately included on Code Red's now out-of-print DVD and Blu-ray releases of *Sasquatch*, paired with *Encounter With the Unknown*.)

This trio of teasers may have given me a good case of the shudders, but they also intrigued me about scary stuff, preparing me for the age when I felt ready to see it on the big screen. (In 1979, I saw *Phantasm*, *Alien*, a *Jaws* re-release and *Halloween*, and my life path was assured.) And I'm grateful that there were no watchdog groups or other forces trying to stop them from being broadcast because they might be bad for me. 💀

SceneQueen

A FRIGHTFUL INHERITANCE

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A SEASONED HORROR PRODUCER INVITES HER TWO KIDS TO PITCH IN ON THE SET OF HER LATEST MOVIE?

BY BARBARA CRAMPTON

This summer, I produced and acted in a new Lovecraft adaptation directed by Joe Lynch called *A Suitable Flesh*, and for the very first time in my career, my kids were on set with me. Luke and Olivia are both in college and I'm a new empty-nester. I greeted this stage of my life with trepidation. Every parent loves their children, and I really *like* my kids; we get along great. Even though not having to focus on the daily particulars of parenting has given me more time for my career, it's been a difficult adjustment to not have them near.

LUKE IS READY FOR HIS CLOSE-UP NOW! DIRECTOR JOE LYNCH SETS UP THE SHOT AS 1ST AD KIM BARNARD OVERSEES.

NATURAL BORN TOP BILLER: OLIVIA KNOWS HOW TO FILL A FRAME.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BARBARA CRAMPTON

In 2021, after our youngest Olivia headed off for her freshman year, my husband Bob and I sold our home in Northern California. Since I was working more, we moved to LA and bought a home on the outskirts of the city. After a few months of traffic-rife commuting, I admitted that I wasn't happy. My mother Agnes always told me she measured people by how "agreeable" they were, and I was lucky that Bob agreed that we could sell our new home and figure it out later.

We stayed at our condo in Lake Tahoe while thinking about what we should do next. I think my inner turmoil was due to my life changing in this big way. Even though I seemed as sunny as ever, I was really struggling. I read a bit about empty nest syndrome and how it may take up to 18 months to get used to a new normal. I set my watch and carried on.

We were in soft prep on *A Suitable Flesh* in January 2022, to be shot in early summer. There was a hitch,

however, as my kids were scheduled to be out of college for their summer break. I offered Luke and Olivia a choice: stay in Lake Tahoe with Dad or come and work on the film as production assistants. There'd be no pay but they'd have a place to live in my Airbnb and maybe have fun learning to do something new.

They finished their semesters and came directly to Jackson, Mississippi, where we were nearing the first day of principal photography. PAs perform a multitude of jobs on a movie, and it's always good to have more hands to help in a crisis. Luke became right-hand helper to Kim Barnard, our 1st AD, and Olivia was excited to work in the wardrobe department. Luke asked if he could bring a classmate, Brian DeLong, who's actually studying to be a director. I realized, "I'm gonna need a bigger Airbnb."

Working on a creative project together gave us a new appreciation for one another. It was a nice way for me to reconnect with them after they left for college. They saw me change into my producer or actor hat depending on the day, and I enjoyed seeing my kids take pride in their accomplishments on set. Luke took it upon himself to arrive at the set earlier than call each day to ensure the coffee was piping hot. Olivia was dedicated to her wardrobe responsibilities and can now see herself working on costumes as a career. They ran errands, locked up the set, worked as stand-ins, ironed costumes, picked up trash and made fast friends with everyone.

Luke said of his time there, "At home we all go to our separate corners, and we really creatively collaborated on something by working together on the movie. It changed my perspective of how I view both you and Olivia. Sometimes you get bound in by the structures of family dynamics and working on the movie broke down those perspectives of who you and Olivia are as people. I've never felt closer to you both before working with you on set. I also learned new things about myself while working on the film. I figured out I can work a lot harder than I thought!"

Olivia added, "Working as a PA on a movie set gave me the opportunity to explore a career path that I might never have even thought of and has inspired me to possibly pursue a career in the entertainment industry. I improved my capacity to work with others, even when the days got extremely hard, from the excruciating heat to being asked to do multiple tasks by multiple people. But I think my favorite part of working on *A Suitable Flesh* was seeing my mom do her job, and seeing how powerful, strong and talented she was as an actress and a producer. Seeing the connections she made with others, and how her presence was a calming and comforting aura to everyone on set. She is so well-loved, and it was very evident while working on this movie, how much everyone respected and looked up to her."

LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER: THE AUTHOR ON SET WITH OLIVIA.

Sharing this experience with Luke and Olivia helped me move forward. I saw them for the first time as more than my children, instead as young adults, responsible for their own creative participation and the completion of tasks asked of them each day. I saw them, felt them, as truly separate from me, having their own unique experience on set.

I'm doing so much better now with empty nest syndrome, spending time with friends and my husband, and working on developing new projects with AMP Films. I'm feeling so much better, in fact, that we bought another new house in Los Angeles, closer to LA proper, where I'll be spending most of my time.

I hope my kids come to visit. 💀

WHO ARE THE MENTEES BEHIND THE MASKS? CRAMPTON'S CHILDREN, LUKE AND OLIVIA, ON THE MONITORS FOR *A SUITABLE FLESH*.

Stephen Graham Jones'

SLASHER NATION

YOU CAN'T KILL THE BOOGEYMAN

Horror fads are cyclical, and slashers have sliced their way back to the top.

Horror gives the audience what it needs, and when it needs it. When one party's in power, vampires get hot. When zombies are the best metaphoric space to fill with our anxieties, the dead shuffle into the limelight. 2022 was neither the year of the zombie nor the vampire, and since werewolves always remind us of nothing so much as our own bestial nature, they never claw quite all the way to the top.

There are haunted houses and possession stories, as well, but they're more a home base, a touchstone, never really catalyzing into a fad. And while cosmic horror's cool and unsettling, it seems to prefer to send its tentacles out quietly, when you're not looking, rather than announcing itself in the spotlight.

Is it the time of the slasher again, then?

The slasher's last heyday was in the late '90s, in the wake of *Scream*'s success, and before that it was a whole Golden Age in the late '70s and early '80s, grasping onto *Halloween*'s coattails. To understand why the slasher might be hot and vital now, though, we first need to look at why it was the horror story of choice during its two previous booms.

Since no slasher happens in a vacuum – okay, save *Jason X* – it helps to look at each boom's contemporaries. *Halloween* arrived in 1978. It codified the slasher genre, but, just as important, it was only a decade out from *Rosemary's Baby* and *Night of the Living Dead*. Since then, there had been *The Exorcist*, *Carrie*, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Jaws*, and *The Omen*. *Alien* and *The Shining* were on the way, as well as *Friday the 13th*, which would certainly cash in on *Halloween*'s success. So, yes, *Halloween* was monumental, and started the slasher craze, but it was also part of a larger infatuation. While its grindhouse template might not have allowed it to sit at the prestige horror table, *Halloween* was still speaking to its era's anxieties as well as any of those more respectable films.

In 1978, the oil crisis was actively changing the country's feeling of security. We had mistakenly bought into the pipe dream that our troubles were over, that this was easy street – we'd finally gotten out of Vietnam, Nixon was no longer in office, we'd walked on the moon. What could go wrong?

As it turned out: long lines at the gas station, and a resulting wave of panic.

Enter *Halloween*, with a story about how vulnerable we still are, nestled in the safety of suburbia. Enter *Halloween*, whispering to us that danger lurks just outside our living room window, and its face won't show any emotion at all when it dispatches us.

Of course America flocked to it, fueling its box office receipts such that *Halloween* became the success story everyone with a camera and a script would be chasing for the next few years. The result was that a whole generation got addicted to the slasher, and the sequels kept showing up every Friday, until the genre was just talking to itself, not the world, which left room for *The Silence of the Lambs* to show that the thriller could deliver the beating heart of the slasher just as well and just as bloodily – masks and cannibalism included, thanks.

So the slasher, like Jason, moldered in its grave, waiting for lightning to bring it back to life.

That lightning strike happened in 1996, with *Scream*.

Scream parodied the genre while at the same time engaging that genre as deeply and as efficiently as anyone ever had. In short, it was a love letter to the slasher, but one fully aware of all the slasher's shortcomings. At a time when sequel fatigue had set in so deeply as to feel permanent, *Scream* stepped in and made everything fun and bloody again, kicking off another boom – the Neo-Slashers – that would last until the Zombie Renaissance shuffled in with depictions of the post-apocalypse that paired pretty well with the images of 9/11 on our 24-hour news cycle.

But why had this second slasher boom even happened in the first place?

We can try to look to the horror of the '90s for guidance, there. The decade starts out with Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho*, then moves quickly into *Jacob's Ladder* and *Misery*, with *Twin Peaks*, *Buffy* and *The X-Files* on television. *Dracula*, *Candyman*, *Interview with the Vampire*, *Event Horizon*, *Species*, *From Dusk Till Dawn*. *The Craft*. A *Psycho* remake. Jack Nicholson in *Wolf*.

Aside from *Candyman*, though, which feels more like a holdover from the Golden Age, *Scream* isn't really the result of any of these. Maybe we should look to the rest of the box office for *Scream*'s contemporaries: *Unforgiven*, *Tombstone*, *Dances with Wolves* – all stories re-engaging the myth of the Old West; *Dazed and Confused*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Casino*, *Goodfellas* – all stories of bygone eras. And what's the Batman franchise of the '90s but a dip back to the '60s and Adam West?

And why would a culture elect to look backwards like that?

Because of unease about the present, I say. Granted, by the time

THE 2020S SLASHER CROWD IS SHAPING UP NICELY.

TERRIFIER 2 PHOTO COURTESY OF BLOODY DISGUSTING & SCREAMBOX / HALLOWEEN ENDS COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES / TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE COURTESY OF NETFLIX / FREAKY COURTESY UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Scream arrived in 1996, the Clinton-Lewinski scandal had yet to occur, but we had Whitewater. '96 did have a school shooting (Frontier Middle School), TWA Flight 800 did blow up, Tupac was killed, and the Menendez Brothers did work together to murder their parents.

We didn't have a flux capacitor to bring us back to the way it had been before all this, but we did have box office dollars we could use as wish tokens, to dial us back a few years. Gordon Gekko's monologue in *Wall Street* had seemed repugnant at the time, but, in light of where the '90s looked to be heading, we would gladly invite him to dinner rather than not have Tupac anymore.

We made some of those wishes with *Scream*, which engaged the nostalgia of the Golden Age, when a hockey-masked killer with a machete was all we had to be scared of. Oh, for those simpler times. *Scream*'s success was the result of a nostalgic impulse, yes, but for as "sophisticated" as we thought we were in 1996, the only honest way we could engage the past we so wanted was through an ironic lens – one that seemed to dismiss even as it was embracing.

And that lasted about up until the Zombie Renaissance, finally leaving us here in 2022, with the slasher showing signs of vitality once again. The last few years have gifted us with *Tragedy Girls*, *The Final Girls*, *Happy Death Day*, *It Follows*, *The Cabin in the Woods*, *Freaky*, *You Might Be the Killer*, more. And we've just seen a direct sequel to 1978's *Halloween* find both critical and commercial success, and slashers are even happening on the bookshelf again, too.

Why, though?

Granted, I don't see the slasher fuse burning as heedlessly as it did in 1978 or 1996, but a slow burn isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's good, really. Slow fuses burn longer. *The Cabin in the Woods* was 2012, right? *Freaky* was right at the end of 2020, but it's of a piece with *Cabin*. And this era *Cabin* and *Freaky* are part of really originates in about 2006, with *Behind the Mask*, followed by *Tucker and Dale vs. Evil* and *Detention*.

This era may be at its peak right about now, with legacy sequels like *Halloween Ends* and *Scream* and wonderfully executed throwbacks like *X*, but I suspect that, instead of walking off a cliff, the genre's going to plateau for a while, giving us a slew of game-changing slashers before stepping into the background over the next decade, to loom menacingly, as slashers do.

The reason for that is this time, our compulsion to find our best reflection in the slasher isn't driven by economics or nostalgia, but by a need for justice.

For the last few years – longer for many of us – America has seen crime after crime perpetrated both on the political stage and at the concerts, schools, and food courts we all move through. But I'm being indirect. To say it plainly: we've seen people committing atrocities and smiling about it, walking away without even an apology.

This is not how it is in the slasher genre.

In a slasher, if you and your privileged crew pants someone less fortunate than yourselves on the fourth-grade playground, then ten years later, at prom, you're getting your payback. And it's not going to be a pantsing, it's going to be your head, rolling out onto the dance floor. This is how justice works in the slasher. You started this cycle, and your punishment is what ends it.

Which is not how the world we live in works. Not even a little bit.

But if we pay our box office dollars, if we buy the right books, if we subscribe to the right streaming service, we can still sit in the harsh light of this kind of closed cycle of justice.

Yes, the reality of the slasher is brutal and unforgiving. But, for all of that, you can't argue that the guilty aren't punished. No, we don't necessarily want to attend this summer camp, or live in that dorm that drips blood – we all have skeletons in our closet, and we all probably deserve the blade.

That doesn't mean it's not cathartic to watch other, even more guilty people get what's coming to them. To believe that wrongdoers won't skate on their crimes is a wonderful fantasy to get to engage in, isn't it? Do you have anyone in your news feed you would pay to go spend a couple of weeks at Crystal Lake, or Elm Street, or Haddonfield, or Woodsboro?

I know I do. And I like to think I'd never actually send them there, but, at the same time, it's all make-believe, isn't it?

At least, it is until you see a certain shape lurking outside your living room window.

Enjoy your slasher, now. It'll last as long as there are guilty people in the world going unpunished, meaning: this one may last pretty much forever. 💀

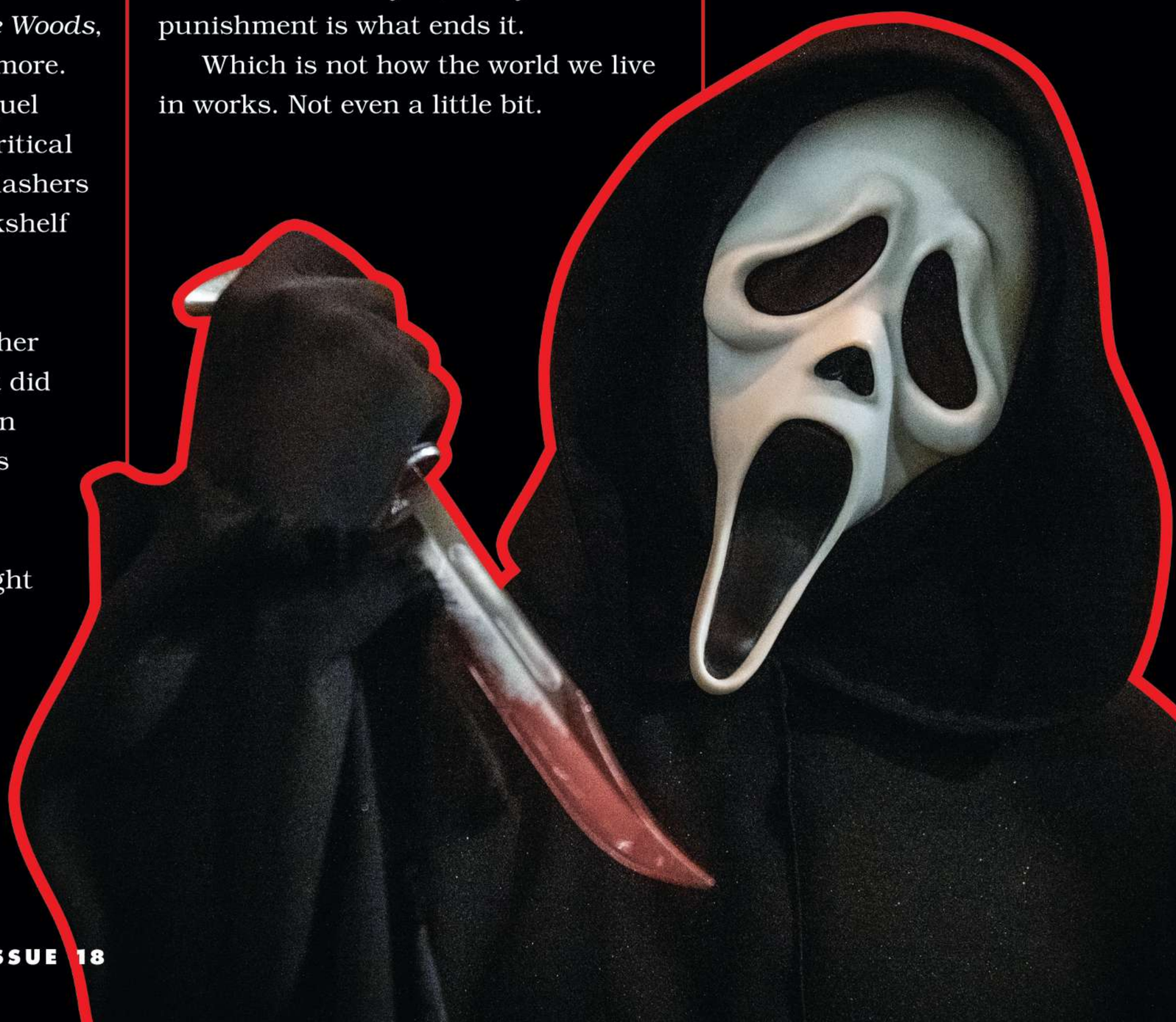
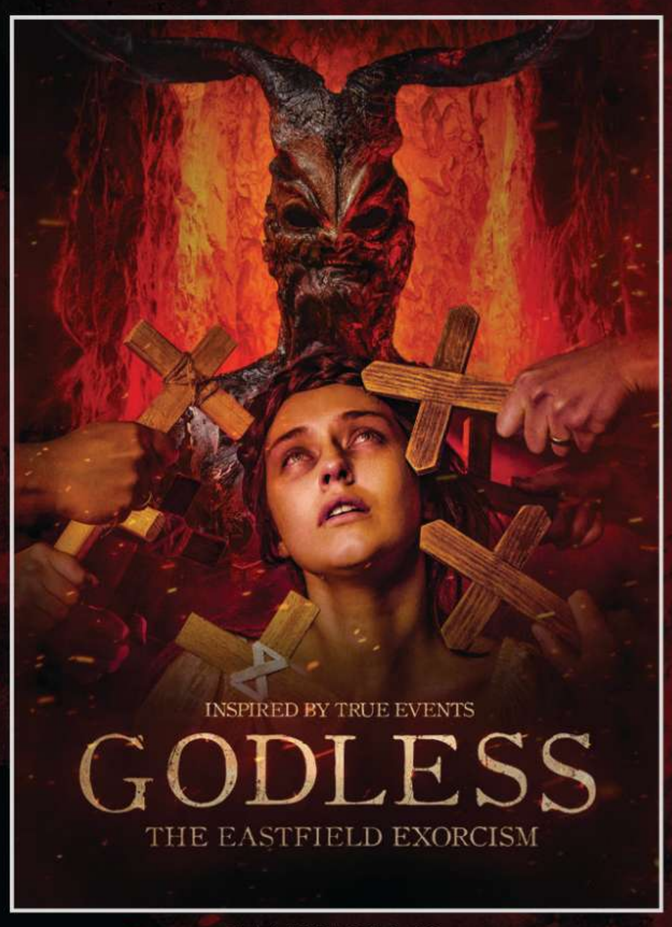


PHOTO COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT STUDIOS

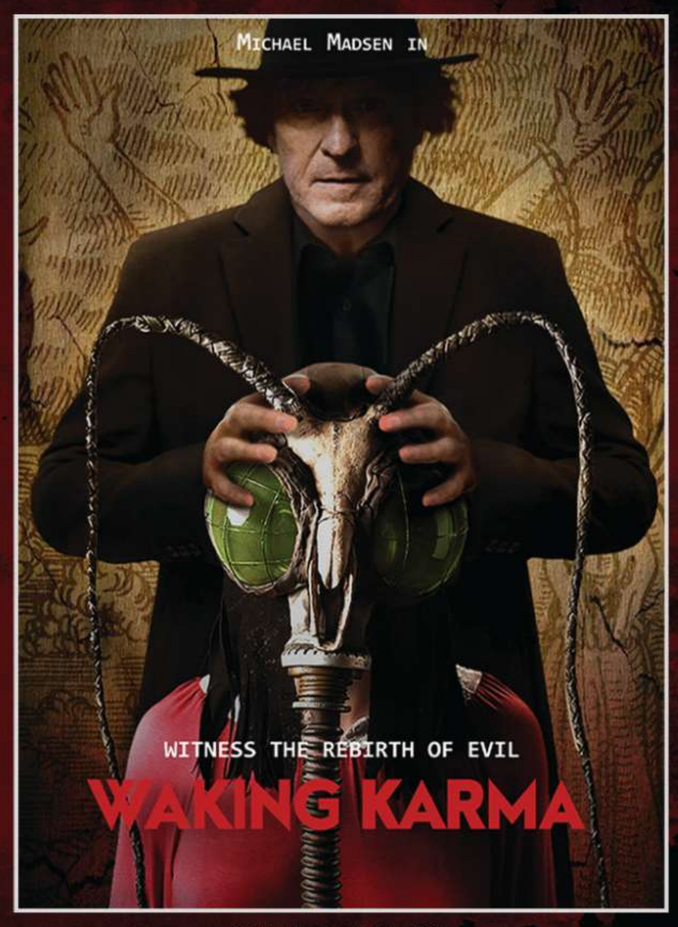
XYZ FILMS

OUT THIS MONTH



JANUARY 12

JANUARY 19



JANUARY 26

OUT NOW

HUESERA: THE BONE WOMAN

a film by Michelle Garza Cervera

IN THEATERS & ON DEMAND EVERYWHERE
FEBRUARY 2023

KILLING IT:

2022's BEST DEATHS IN HORROR

BY MATT DONATO

As we wrap another year with no shortage of gory gratification, let's toast those horror creators and effects crafters who engage the grandest spectacle of on-screen kills. It's been a banner year for iconic horror franchises furthering their legacies, but don't count out some bloodthirsty indie underdogs. Bedroom chainsaw penetration, crispy fried faces, killer massage chairs, the works. They all deserve their special highlight here in the pages of FANGORIA.

10 SCREAM (2022)

Looking Death In The Mask

Dylan Minnette's demise as Wes Hicks in *Scream* might not be the most extravagant, but it's the most heartless. As Ghostface pins the innocent good-boy against the Hicks' front door, he's overpowered without the ability to fight back. Ghostface plunges a blade into Wes' neck while the camera holds, blood oozing as the steel sinks deeper, then all the way through. Wes' face cycles through a range of emotions as he comes to terms with his fate. Hopeless grunts, glassy eyes, and unfiltered fear set the mood. Directors Radio Silence remind us that while *Scream* movies are plenty fun, death isn't.

9 MARGAUX

Malfunctioning Relaxation Therapy

The voice of Siri plays a sadistic A.I. in Steven C. Miller's "*Smart House* but scarier" flick *Margaux*. The house's current inhabitants aim for a relaxing night, so Billy hops in the A.I. controlled massage chair – but this isn't a Sharper Image model. Billy asks for "more pressure," so Margaux does as requested… by crushing Billy's body until his veins turn dark purple. Flesh splits to expose muscle tissue, the chair's leather grasp constricts tighter, and Billy's head explodes like a shotgun blast of gore all over his panicking partner. Be specific with your words!

8 CHUCKY
Divine Spontaneous Combustion

Chucky creator Don Mancini grants the fantasies of countless horror fans with thirsty crushes on Devon Sawa by letting him explode on camera… but maybe not exactly as they might've wished. The show's second season features an exorcism led by Sawa's Father Bryce, who becomes possessed by Charles Lee Ray in the process. Sawa showcases a solid "Brad Dourif as Chucky" impression before combusting into a cannon blast of floppy body parts, squirting blood, and tattered garment shreds. Mancini gets his money's worth for the abrupt and violent death sequence, showing the padre's gory disappearing act over ten times from different angles. Add another holy ghost to the list!

7 HALLOWEEN ENDS
Michael Myers Killed The Radio Star

In the last of the *Halloween* trilogy by David Gordon Green, Not-Michael Myers (aka Corey Cunningham) beefs with DJ Willy the Kid, dislocating his jaw and cutting his tongue off with scissors. The chunk of detached muscle lands on a spinning Cramps vinyl, bouncing around like a tastebud-covered fish out of water. All that's missing is "If You Want Blood (You've Got It)" up next in the playlist.

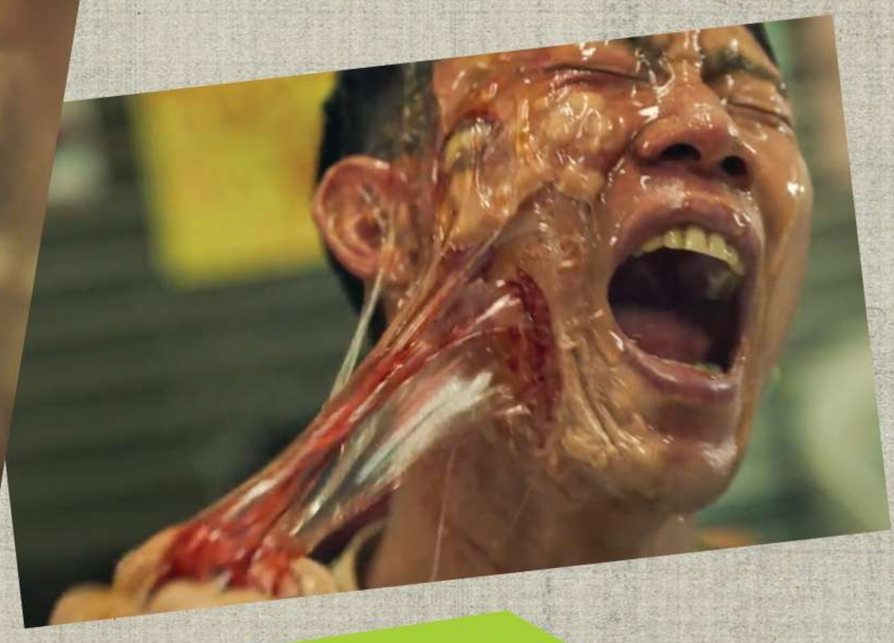
6 PUSSYCAKE
A Gruesome Gig Gone Wrong

Sometimes all you need is an uncomplicated pile of organs. In Pablo Parés' film, also called *Emesis*, female alt-rockers PussyCake can do nothing while their manager is gutted by a stark-raving zomboid (no longer her dearest Simón), as it opens her belly with a pen's pointed tip after covering her in milky white spew. All the good stuff plops onto the pavement as Pato stares in shock. Intestines, slimy inside juices – it all waterfalls out like a piñata at Jeffrey Dahmer's birthday.

PHOTOS - *SCREAM*: PARAMOUNT PICTURES, *MARGAUX*: LIGHTHOUSE PICTURES, *CHUCKY*: NBCUNIVERSAL, *HALLOWEEN ENDS*: UNIVERSAL PICTURES, *PUSSYCAKE*: SCREAMBOX

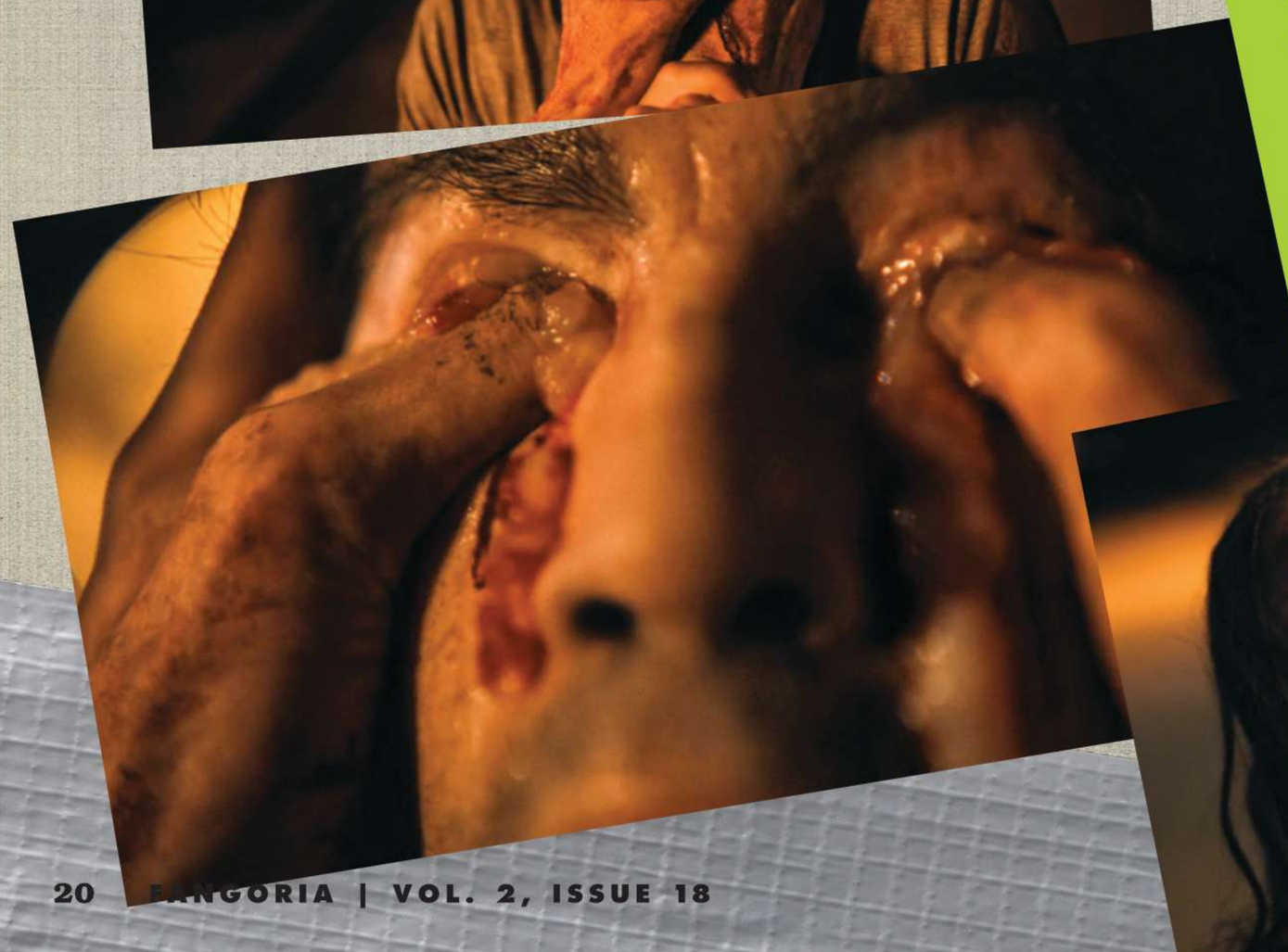
5 THE SADNESS
French Fried Face Flesh

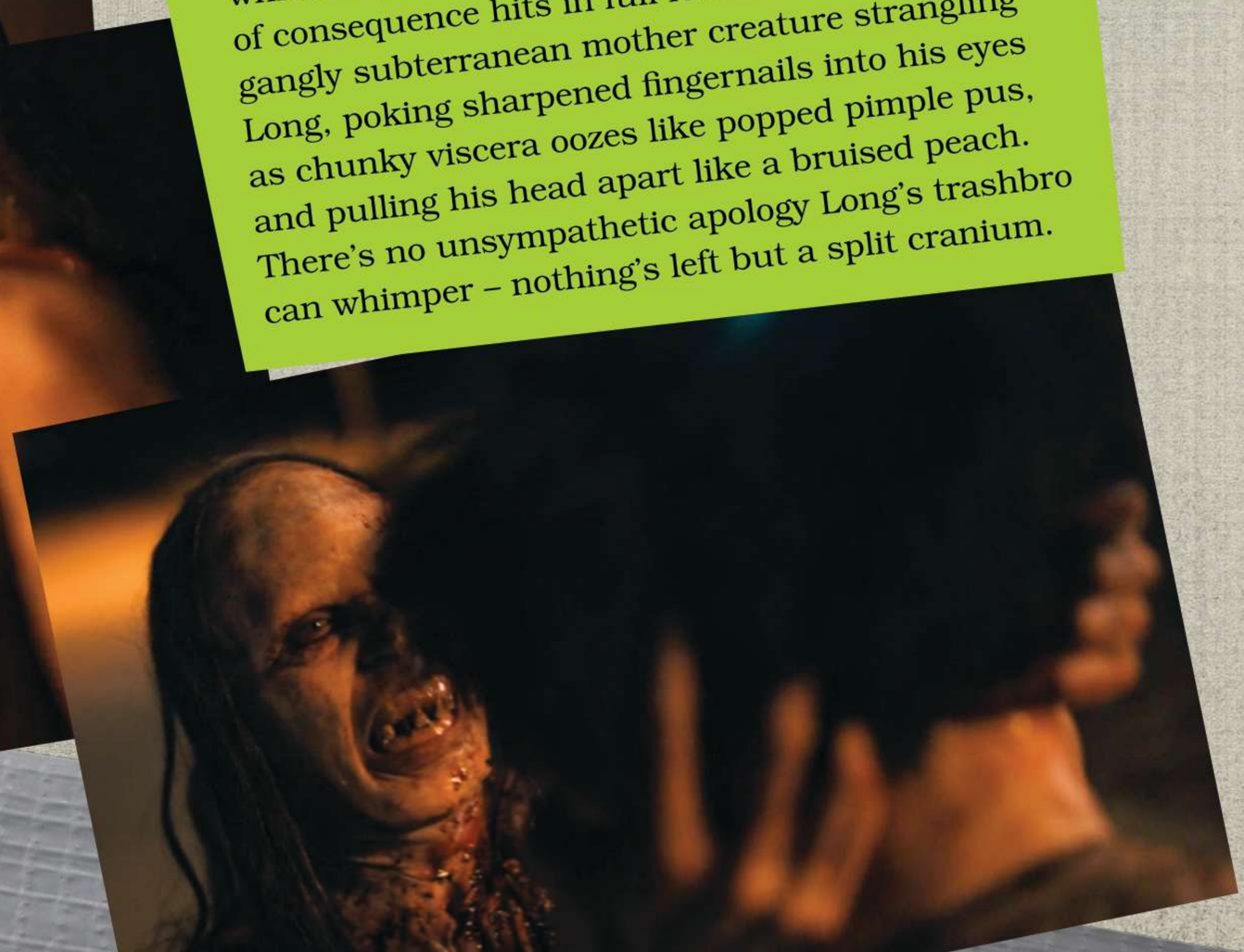
Rob Jabbaz's *The Sadness* proves that dangerous restaurant equipment can serve up top-notch horror deaths (we might not see this poor sap officially die, but for this list's purposes, he dead). As citizens begin going full no-morality berserker, "Granny" grabs a fryer basket dunked in bubbling oil and smashes some poor cafe worker's head. French fries scatter as scalding oil pours down the cook's face, then the maniac grandma starts peeling away greasy handfuls of third degree-burned flesh while boils pustulate. Prosthetics do an excellent job recreating the painful wounds, which raises an important question – why don't more horror movies take place in kitchens?



4 BARBARIAN
You're Cancelled

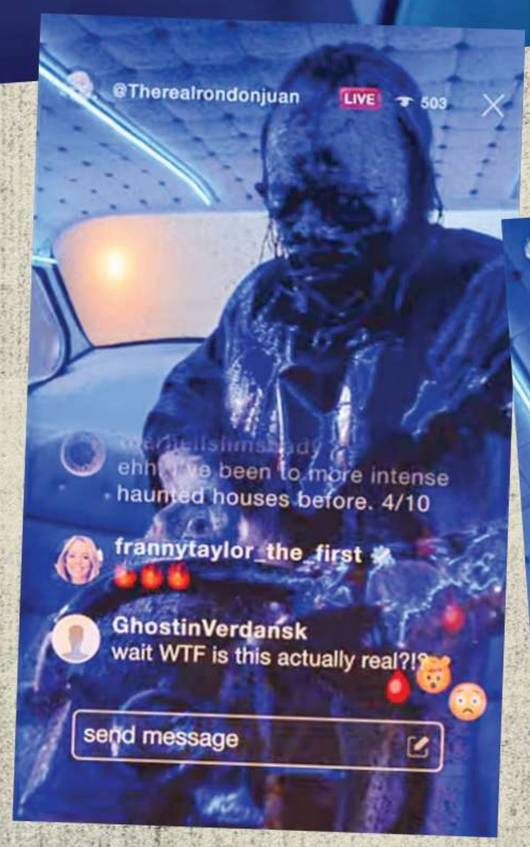
The justifiably brutal conclusion of Zach Cregger's *Barbarian* finishes with Justin Long's ousted Hollywood abuser getting what's coming, which might still not be enough. The catharsis of consequence hits in full force with the film's gangly subterranean mother creature strangling Long, poking sharpened fingernails into his eyes as chunky viscera oozes like popped pimple pus, and pulling his head apart like a bruised peach. There's no unsympathetic apology Long's trashbro can whimper – nothing's left but a split cranium.





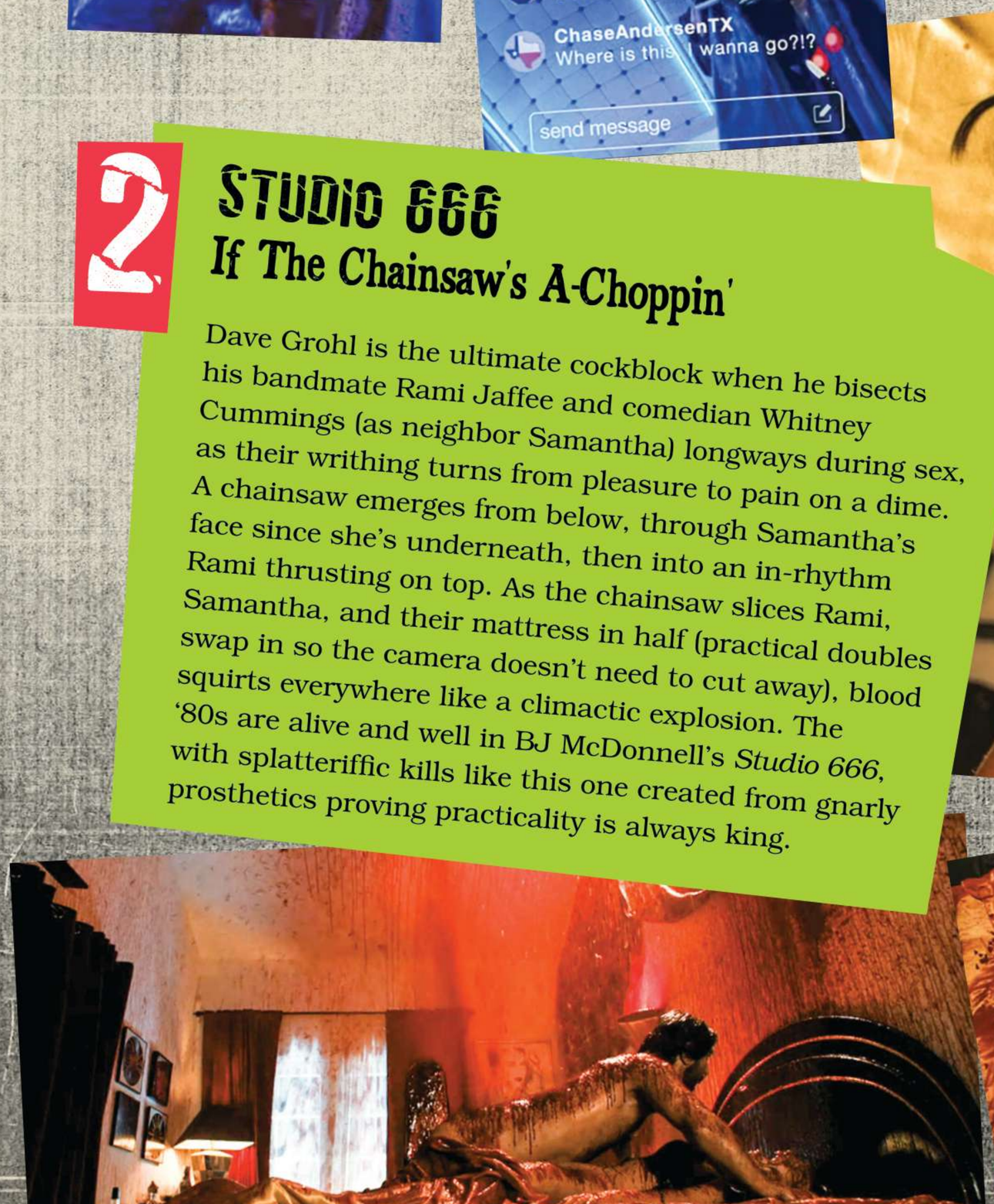
3 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
The Chains On The Bus Go Saw, Saw, Saw!

Leatherface defends his Texas turf from gentrifying hipsters with livestreams by going all slaughterhouse-happy on a bus full of unwanted visitors. As the aging slasher icon swings his revving chainsaw, appendages hit the floor while blood splatters over walls, upholstery, and glass – it's a "Blood Rave" redecoration. The body count in David Blue Garcia's franchise entry is as noteworthy as the executions when Leatherface's weapon shreds victims from shoulder to stomach, skewers two bodies with one plunge, and halves unsuccessful window escapees, leaving guts to drape off the sill. Leatherface's still got it, kiddies.



2 STUDIO 666
If The Chainsaw's A-Choppin'

Dave Grohl is the ultimate cockblock when he bisects his bandmate Rami Jaffee and comedian Whitney Cummings (as neighbor Samantha) longways during sex, as their writhing turns from pleasure to pain on a dime. A chainsaw emerges from below, through Samantha's face since she's underneath, then into an in-rhythm Rami thrusting on top. As the chainsaw slices Rami, Samantha, and their mattress in half (practical doubles swap in so the camera doesn't need to cut away), blood squirts everywhere like a climactic explosion. The '80s are alive and well in BJ McDonnell's *Studio 666*, with splatteriffic kills like this one created from gnarly prosthetics proving practicality is always king.

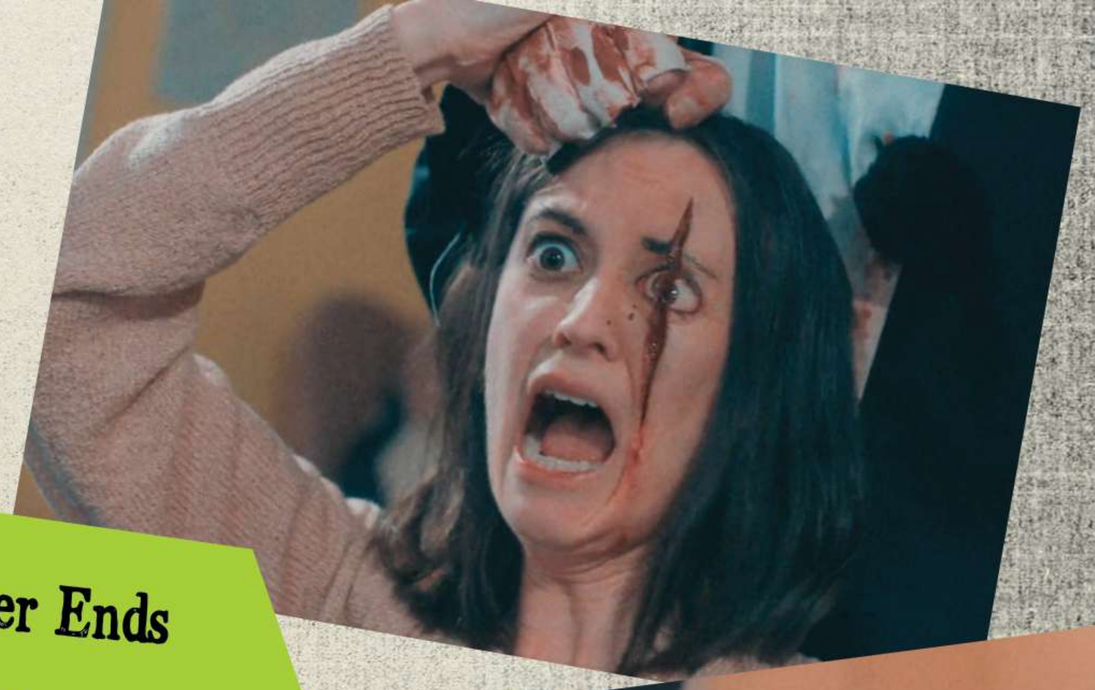


PHOTOS - *THE SADNESS*: SHUDDER, *BARBARIAN*: 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, *TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*: NETFLIX, *STUDIO 666*: OPEN ROAD FILMS

1

TERRIFIER 2
This Is The Kill That Ne-ver Ends

Art the Clown's well-earned crown proves indies can hang with the big shooters in Damien Leone's runaway success of a sequel. He attacks Allie as she flees to her bedroom, unleashing an onslaught of pain that extends for a ruthless yet hilarious duration. (Fun fact: director Leone based this kill on Mary Kelly, Jack the Ripper's final victim.) Art slices Allie's eye in half with a sharp implement (shown in full), exposes her meaty brain with a scissor scalping, flays her rubbery flesh before tearing off limbs like wiggly tree branches – then, when you think Art is done, he giddily skips back into frame with salt and bleach. Art rubs the irritators under Allie's skin like he's dry-brining a Thanksgiving turkey, silently cackling the whole time. He's a master craftsman taking full advantage of his breathing canvas while Allie squirms, screams, and experiences Cenobite-levels of exquisite punishment.



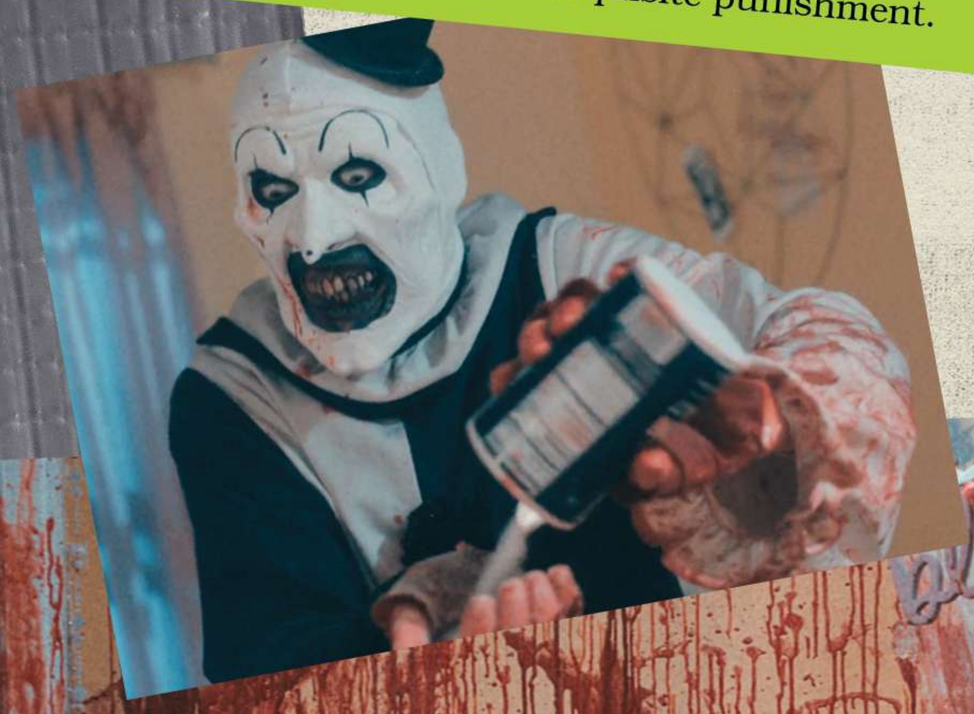


PHOTO COURTESY OF BLOODY DISGUSTING & SCREAMBOX

BY BRETT GALLMAN

FROM THE TOP ROPE TO BEYOND THE STARS

CHILDHOOD FANTASIES AND NIGHTMARES COLLIDE IN *KIDS VS ALIENS*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RLJE FILMS & SHUDDER

DIRECTOR JASON EISENER WALKS BEN TECTOR (MILES) THROUGH CHILDHOOD'S END.

To find inspiration for his latest feature film, Jason Eisener rummaged through his past in a number of ways. Not only does *Kids vs. Aliens* echo his "Slumber Party Alien Abduction" segment in *V/H/S 2*, but it's also a joyous ode to his childhood obsessions. As the mash-up title implies, his extraterrestrial monster movie is a kitbashed romp that captures the peculiar purgatory of adolescence, where it's not quite time to put away childish things, no matter how much the world — or even something out of this world — might compel you to do so.

NIGHTMARE FUEL: EISENER PULLED THE ABDUCTION SCENES (THIS PAGE AND FACING) FROM HIS OWN *FIRE IN THE SKY*-TAINTED CHILDHOOD.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RLJE FILMS & SHUDDER

The titular kids in this bout find themselves at a familiar crossroads. Gary (Dominic Mariche) and his pre-teen pals are still rooted in childhood, staging wrestling matches and filming homemade movies in a makeshift playhouse. Big sister Sam (Phoebe Rex) is getting older, though; while she's still content to wrestle with her younger brother and his friends, she's starting to feel the pull of adolescence from her teenage friends, particularly Billy (Calem MacDonald), a charming bad boy who convinces her to throw a party while her parents are out of town. Visitors from beyond prove to be the ultimate party crashers when a group of vicious aliens intrudes, forcing the kids to band together and fend off the invaders.

According to Eisener, *Kids vs. Aliens* has been in the works for a while, dating back to the premiere of *V/H/S 2* in 2013. "[Producer] Brad Miska and I have been wanting to work together again, and we've always talked about the idea of turning that short into a feature," he reveals. It wasn't simply a matter of expanding the short, either, especially after a decade-long layoff from the material. "Had the movie been made back then, it probably would have been much different," he admits. "Now, I wanted to do something that was still totally different from the short, and I wanted it to stand on its own. It's been ten years since, and there are other inspirations and things I wanted to try out."

One of those things involved delving deep into his childhood obsessions, an approach he honed early in his filmmaking career. "When I was developing *Hobo with a Shotgun*, I wanted to track down all of the things that helped shape my artistic aesthetic," he says. The search led him back to his toy box, where he decided to channel his inner child. "You can learn so much about yourself, and about why you like certain things today," he insists. Embracing the formative experiences of his youth, Eisener says "my childhood guides everything I do," something that's especially obvious in the infectious energy of *Kids vs. Aliens*.

Certain films can sometimes feel like we're watching a filmmaker romping through a figurative sandbox, bashing their toys together for our amusement, and in this case Eisener eagerly invites the comparison. "*Kids vs. Aliens* takes inspiration from a lot of the things that I was really into when I was a kid," he reveals before taking a trip down memory lane. "I would make up stories with my wrestling action figures, and sometimes they'd be fighting other wrestlers. Sometimes they'd be fighting Ninja Turtles, Ghostbusters, or Transformers. I would come up with storylines on how we all work." For Eisener, the characters in the film provided a chance to return to that mentality. "The kids are kind of taking a bunch of things that they're inspired by, and then mashing it into a blender. They're inspired not just by wrestling; they're into dinosaurs and fantasy films."

Given Eisener's success in the wrestling arena, it should come as no surprise that this particular childhood obsession plays a prominent role in *Kids vs. Aliens*. As a creator of the wrestling documentaries *Dark Side of the Ring* and *Tales from the Territories*, he's become synonymous with the squared circle, and he didn't hesitate to channel his enthusiasm for that realm by weaving it into the film's plot and making it a critical part

MILES (BEN TECTOR), JACK (ASHER GRAYSON) AND GARY (DOMINIC MARICHE) MIGHT SURVIVE THE ALIEN INVASION WITH THE HELP OF SAM (PHOEBE REX, OPPOSITE).

of its stylistic DNA. He's especially fond of the bombastic, cartoonish era of the '80s and '90s, and its tone charted the course for *Kids vs. Aliens*. "I grew up in the '80s and I was a fan of wrestling during that heyday. The era of Macho Man Randy Savage, Ultimate Warrior, Undertaker, and Jake Roberts, these larger than life characters," he says, noting that he even had his young cast look to these icons for inspiration. "When I was working with the kids, we would watch wrestlers give promos so they could learn how to do promos. They each got into their characters or little wrestling gimmicks."

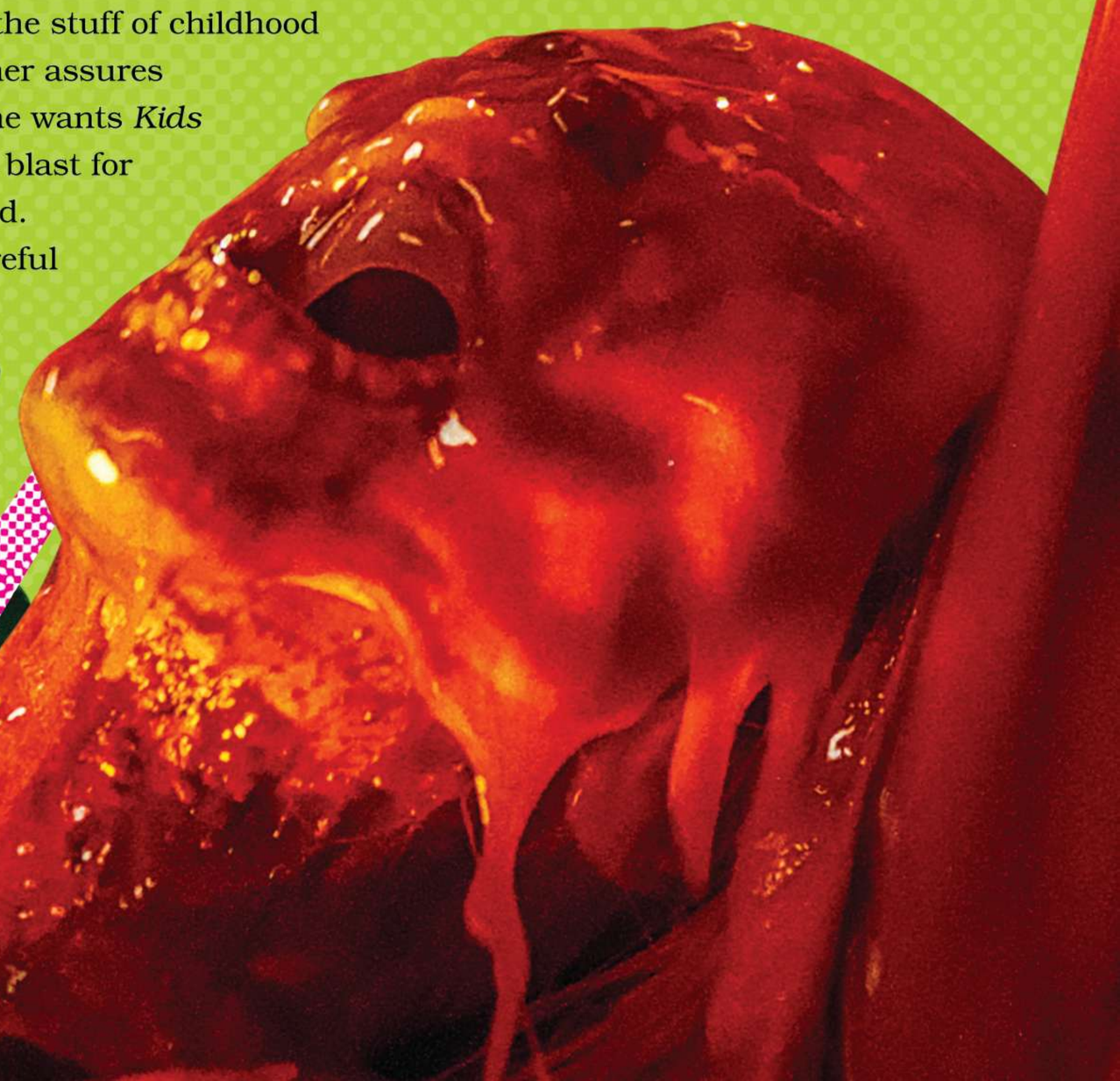
The extraterrestrial half of the film's title also takes direct inspiration from Eisener's childhood fascination with — and fear of — alien life. In a story that likely sounds familiar to many older millennials, Eisener reveals he was traumatized by the story and nightmarish imagery of *Fire in the Sky*. "I remember the trailer for *Fire in the Sky*, and that trailer alone messed me up so much. This was during a time when my parents were trying to convince me there's no such thing as ghosts or aliens, and I'd keep a light on in my room," he says. Learning about the Travis Walton UFO incident sent Eisener down an alien rabbit hole, so much so that it inspired horrifying experiences with sleep paralysis. "I would see a dark figure walk into my room," he details, noting that they often took the familiar shape of the Grey Man alien, which inspired the creature design in *Kids vs. Aliens*. "When I saw those figures, they were these long, bipedal figures with skinny bodies that are humanoid, and I've always found that really terrifying. What you see in *Kids vs. Aliens* is a depiction of my nightmares."

Kids vs. Aliens also pays tribute to the local lore of Eisener's native Nova Scotia when some local fishermen are the first to spot the alien visitors. "There's so much great folklore here, but we have a really great UFO crash story," he begins before describing the 1967 Shag Harbour incident. "A bunch of fishermen saw something go down, and they first thought it was a plane. And so they raised their boats out there to find survivors, but when they got there, there was just a glowing light coming from the depths below." The image of submerged aliens stuck with Eisener and inspired a climactic underwater sequence in the film, allowing him to stage some unique extraterrestrial mayhem. "I never heard of aliens coming out of the ocean, you know? I've always been fascinated by that idea, and I incorporated it into *Kids vs. Aliens*," Eisener explains.

Despite being the stuff of childhood nightmares, Eisener assures FANGORIA that he wants *Kids vs. Aliens* to be a blast for the teenage crowd. While he was careful to mold this nostalgia piece into his own image, he couldn't help looking to *The Monster Squad* for inspiration, particularly its raucous depiction of childhood. "I had a pizza party at my house where the kid actors and their parents came over, and we showed *The Monster Squad*. It was an edgier kid's movie since the kids swear and do some heavier things. I felt like that was in the spirit of what we were trying to do."

Every generation deserves a gateway horror movie that hits a certain sweet spot between harmless fun and genuine transgression, and Eisener is eager to deliver this one. "I'm trying to do something that will connect with kids watching today, because that's who I made the movie for. I want them to watch the movie and be excited about what they see." 💀

"I'M TRYING TO DO SOMETHING THAT WILL CONNECT WITH KIDS WATCHING TODAY, BECAUSE THAT'S WHO I MADE THE MOVIE FOR."
-JASON EISENER



MANUFACTURING THE MENACING MOVES OF M3GAN

Adrien Morot and his team of puppeteers and FX artists help deliver one of the creepiest performances of the year.

BY BRITT HAYES

M3GAN is a girl.

That's the initial impression head puppeteer Adrien Morot hopes people get from the animatronic he designed. In reality, he explains, "She's a combination of many things, but she's primarily an animatronic puppet that's computer-driven." And as the title character in *M3GAN*, everything depends on her performance. It takes a village to raise a child – or a small team of puppeteers and makeup effects artists.

M3GAN (which stands for Model 3 Generative Android) is an advanced A.I. prototype programmed to be "a child's greatest companion and a parent's greatest ally." She has one job: to protect a young girl named Cady from emotional and physical harm. And she takes her job *very* seriously.

To bring M3GAN to life, director Gerard Johnstone turned to Morot and Kathy Tse, veterans of the makeup effects industry renowned for their prosthetics and animatronics. In addition to classics like *Brainscan* and *Martyrs*, Morot has worked with the likes of Robert Eggers (*The Lighthouse*) and Alexandre Aja (*Crawl*), and made repeat customers of both Darren Aronofsky and Denis Villeneuve. Having served as the makeup effects department head on *Cult of Chucky*, Morot knew exactly what it would take to make M3GAN work.

"The key to the character is the uncanny valley," he says, referring to the theory introduced in the 1970s by robotics professor Masahiro Mori.

The more an object, such as a robot, resembles a human being, the more empathy we have for it. These feelings intensify up to a certain point and then decline dramatically into a region marked by revulsion to the object – the uncanny valley. As the object continues to take on human characteristics, our empathy returns, but it's that region of discomfort, or "valley of eeriness," as Mori called it, that's given birth to some of the most terrifying imagery in pop culture: seemingly benign artifacts like Madame Tussauds' wax figures and the computer-generated cinematic exploits of Robert Zemeckis exist in the uncanny valley alongside zombies, body snatchers, doppelgängers and creepy dolls.

"The thing about *Child's Play* and Chucky is that it's sort of over the top, and we wanted to keep M3GAN within the realm of reality," Morot explains, "and maybe downplay it to a certain point so that her movements became almost reptilian." There is a deliberate quality to the way M3GAN moves in the film, the way her eyes track a person's movements, and the way her head slowly tilts as if she's really perceiving and processing the world around her. "One of the things that I wanted to get right was to find the perfect balance between reality and the uncanny valley where, if you look at it, it looks real but the proportions are not quite there," Morot says. "It's not Chucky, it's not an obvious doll. It's doll-like in proportions yet it is so real that it makes it very unsettling, even in person."

Allison Williams, who plays M3GAN's on-screen creator, Gemma, was frequently unsettled by her animatronic co-star. "Uncanny" is the word she uses most often to describe the puppet, which was meticulously designed to look like a lifelike, child-sized robot with an A.I. chip for a brain. When Morot hears that word – "uncanny" – he feels accomplished. "She looks human," Morot says. "She's staring right down the barrel of your eyes, and yet there's a coldness to her delivery, in the way she talks and the way she looks at you, that makes you uncomfortable."

Maybe it's the eyes. "A lot of killer doll puppets that were made in the past, the eyes would be wandering. It doesn't look like they're necessarily looking at something," he says, "and with M3GAN, all of our actors told us it was unsettling how much it was like she was looking into your soul." To achieve this chilling effect, Morot would stand behind the actor M3GAN was interacting with to give the doll's eyes a focal point. While Morot directed M3GAN's eyes, Tse was in control of her facial expressions. Tse, whom Morot calls "essential to the creation" of M3GAN, worked closely with Johnstone to design her appearance – an exhaustive process that involved months of back-and-forth. Because M3GAN is a doll designed for little girls, Morot says, "It was very important to have Kathy very, very involved with the design. We thought that having a feminine touch to the design was crucial to make it believable and to make it subject-appropriate."

The creepiest part of M3GAN is all of her *parts*. Though she bears some resemblance to her fictional maker, Morot says the visual references they used were photos of child models in retail catalogs. Johnstone and Tse would "mix and match" the features of different children – a nose here, an eye there – to create M3GAN's face. But M3GAN is more than just a pretty face Frankensteined together from the disembodied features of children in magazines. "At a certain point in the movie," Morot says, "you see what M3GAN looks like underneath the skin, and all of that

RAISING M3GAN: ADRIEN MOROT PREPS THE DIVA WHILE DIRECTOR GERARD JOHNSTONE LOOKS ON.

PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY SHORT / COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

was sculpted in 3D. Everything was 3D-printed from which we made molds and from those molds we were able to cast parts out of either urethane for all the robot parts, or silicone for everything that's M3GAN, as we see her."

That included building multiple M3GAN puppets and limbs that could perform specific actions depending on what was required for the shoot that day. M3GAN's body parts were stored in a moving truck which Morot and his team used as an on-location base. "We had shelves going from the floor to the ceiling and we organized the shelves so that you'd walk in and it would look like you were walking into a morgue with corpses lined up on both sides, all looking like the same little girl," Morot says. "That sounds creepy, but it was also *great*."

Having so many puppets on hand made filming much easier for all involved. "We couldn't have a movie where the lead character is always breaking down and you have to wait for something to be fixed," says Morot, whose animatronics team included designer Dan Thomson and technician Devin Seman, both of whom proved crucial to keeping M3GAN in working order. "Most of the time when you're building stuff for movies it only has to last for a scene or one shot and that's it," Morot explains. "Often when you do makeup effects it's like, 'OK, there's going to be a mechanical puppet head that's going to be shot in the head and blow up,' so it's only there for a fraction of a second and it only has to last for that moment." But M3GAN isn't like other puppets. "She's the most complex piece of animatronic we've built in the shop, by far," says Morot, who found the process of working on *M3GAN* creatively liberating. "It was nice to have not only something that was giving us freedom in terms of the movement and expression that we wanted, but that was as reliable as M3GAN was."

Reliable though she ultimately proved to be, working with M3GAN could sometimes be challenging. Morot explains: "Originally, M3GAN was a lot more doll-like in terms of proportions, so her face was the same, but from the jawline down she was closer to a Barbie doll in proportions than a real child." This might not have been a problem, except that Johnstone

DOLLED UP: KATHY TSE GETS M3GAN CAMERA-READY TO (BELOW) MURDER COLE (BRIAN JORDAN ALVAREZ).

"It's not Chucky, it's not an obvious doll... that makes it very unsettling, even in person."

-Adrien Morot

had cast a young actor named Amie Donald to play M3GAN in scenes that required "broad" movements, like walking around or – everyone's favorite – dancing. With production set to begin in New Zealand in two weeks, Morot had sent a "preliminary mask" of M3GAN's face over for Donald to wear in test footage. That's when Johnstone became concerned about the proportions, Morot says. "The difference in the body proportions was so flagrant and [Johnstone] was like, 'There has to be something we can do about this.'" Luckily, Morot had an idea. He sent Donald over to a facility in New Zealand to get a complete 3D scan of her body. Once his team had the digital files, he says, "We were able to do a 3D milling out of foam of her body and from that we made molds, and we were able to build a foam shell that had Amie's proportions and that we were able to dress up our doll in." Suiting M3GAN up in her Amie shell "seamlessly blended them together," says Morot. "We lost a little of M3GAN, of the robot, but that was for better cohesion between the two."

Morot and his team had essentially built a working child actor. And like any actor, M3GAN was expected to know her lines. Initially, Morot says, it took about 15 to 20 takes to perfect M3GAN's line delivery. That might work on a David Fincher set, but in Morot's experience, having that kind of time on the schedule was a luxury. "We quickly realized we wouldn't be able to afford that many takes on a real movie set," he says. "That's why all of the lines are pre-recorded." Johnstone created a data bank with all of M3GAN's dialogue from the movie and sent it over to Morot's team so they could "record" her speaking performance on a computer. "The way it works," he explains, "is that you sort of do broad lip movements and you go into your remote controls and by hand you do the movements – so somebody's gotta do the mouth, somebody's gotta do the lips, and all of those movements are translated to graphs on the screen. And then you can adjust the graphs to perfectly match the audio recording."

The actual performance of M3GAN was an elaborate, coordinated effort which required extensive rehearsals. "It took a few weeks until there was a perfect relationship between the

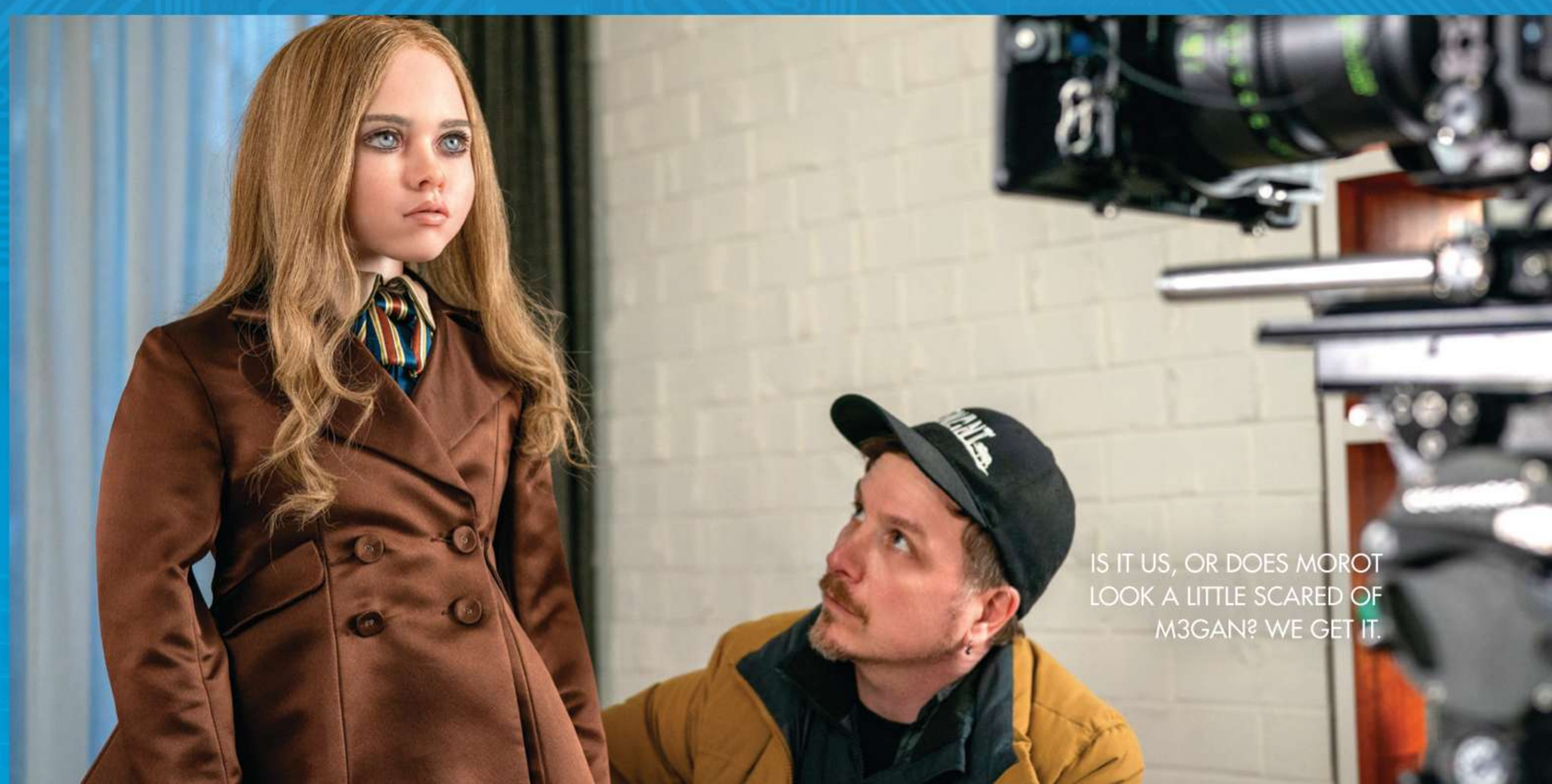
> "She's staring right down the barrel of your eyes, and yet there's a coldness to her delivery... that makes you uncomfortable."
>
> -Adrien Morot

puppeteering team and we *found* the character of M3GAN," says Morot. As was the case for her human co-stars, M3GAN would also need to "learn" the blocking for every scene. "If M3GAN has to sit in this chair, we have to think, 'OK, where is that going to be adapted to our puppet? Where are we going to hide the cables?'" Morot says. "It takes some time to adapt to whatever situation she has to be in, and then you have to know what the scene is and what Gerard is expecting of the puppet. What kind of reaction? Where is she looking and how is she moving her head? How is she moving her body?"

All these complexities and quirks and demands just make M3GAN seem more human. In reality, she is the combined effort of numerous puppeteers, effects artists and technicians. For Morot, she's also the latest achievement in a career that began in earnest in his parents' basement four decades ago. He was 11 years old when he bought his first issue of FANGORIA. "It was issue 23, with *The Evil Dead* on the cover," says Morot. "I perfectly remember the one. That completely changed my life." Not that he needed much prodding. "Before I started reading FANGORIA, I was already doing masks in my basement and doing makeups on my friends." Morot found inspiration in the creations of Rick Baker, Matthew Mungle, Steve Johnson – "the classics," he says. Johnson actually ended up hiring a young Morot in the early '90s. During his nine-year stint at Johnson's XFX, he worked on *Brainscan* and *Species II*.

"Some kids play baseball and look at baseball players as their source of inspiration and personal heroes, but for me it was all makeup artists," says Morot. "My ultimate goal in life was to have one of my creations on the cover of FANGORIA magazine. That was all I was striving for. I thought, 'I could die happy when that happens.'" 💀

PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY SHORT / COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES



IS IT US, OR DOES MOROT LOOK A LITTLE SCARED OF M3GAN? WE GET IT.

INTO THE UNCANNY VALLEY

After crushing it in *Get Out* and *The Perfection*, Allison Williams' horror journey continues with

MEGAN

By Britt Hayes

Few actors have weaponized their perceived persona as skillfully as Allison Williams, whose mere presence in a movie trailer can have a destabilizing effect. When she appears in the trailer for M3GAN, Williams knows there's a "healthy skepticism" about her character's motivations. In the new film from director Gerard Johnstone (*Housebound*), Williams plays Gemma, a roboticist who uses artificial intelligence to develop a sophisticated doll named M3GAN – an acronym for Model 3 Generative Android. The intention behind M3GAN is more than just child's play, of course. Echoing Gemma's line in the film, Williams describes the startlingly lifelike A.I. as "a companion for kids and a greatest ally for parents."

As the name implies, M3GAN isn't Gemma's first A.I. project: Williams says there are a few examples of her character's previous experiments in the film, including something called "Perpetual Pets." (Though she stops herself from saying too much about that particular product, it's easy to imagine how a robotic pet fits into a horror movie about A.I.) "But none of it really feels humanoid," Williams says, until Gemma creates M3GAN. With honey-blonde hair, piercing blue eyes, and the blemish-free face of a Neutrogena model, M3GAN is the fun-size mirror image of her creator. "It's fascinating that what Gemma comes up with is a very airbrush-filtered version of me – if I were in beauty pageants when I was eight years old," Williams adds.

There's way more to M3GAN than meets the eye, but it's hard to get over the aesthetics. She has the facial structure of an Olsen twin and a wardrobe from J. Crew. She looks like an American Girl doll who could help you find all the clues in the marketing materials for Taylor Swift's latest album. She is an exaggerated performance of heteronormative pre-teen femininity. If the ultimate goal of artificial intelligence is realness, then robots are a form of drag. And M3GAN is serving it to you every time.

"It was tough sharing a screen with her," Williams says of her co-star, whose face she describes as "perfect in a way that's so upsetting to look at."

M3GAN's visage is of particular interest to Williams, who often uses adjectives like "unsettling" and "breathtaking" and – "'Uncanny' is the word I keep coming back to," Williams says. "But it's also pleasing, and that's exactly the sort of recipe for someone who's going to make her presence known and also makes us ask: Why do we pay more attention to her if she is conventionally pretty?"

Though her looks are deadening (her perceptive head-tilts feel more Mean Girl than My Buddy), M3GAN isn't just a "looks" queen. She can dance, too. In a scene prominently featured in the trailer, M3GAN busts out the sort of choreography you'd expect to see in a Sia video. "Watching that on set was one of the most breathtaking experiences ever," says Williams of the dance scene, which became an instant meme when the trailer was released. Williams recalls how the entire crew erupted in applause after seeing M3GAN's dance for the first time, and she's not surprised that it's already such a hit. "People just know an iconic moment when they see it," she says.

The response to the trailer – and that dance scene – is one of Williams's favorite things about M3GAN. "We were so excited that people got her. They got her vibe." And what is M3GAN's *vibe*, exactly? "Super protective, attentive, and slightly off-putting, but mostly just a fun pal," she explains. "And you do *not* want to mess with her."

Williams would know better than most: as M3GAN's on-screen creator, the actor shared many scenes with her animatronic co-star, whose performance was a collaborative effort between numerous puppeteers. "Even if there are six people working M3GAN at a given time, it was so easy to forget about all of them," Williams says. "There were a lot of moments where Megan's face was *this* close to mine and whether she wasn't moving at all,

M3GAN GOES ANALOG FOR STORY TIME WITH CADY (VIOLET MCGRAW), AND GOES MEDIEVAL ON A BULLY (JACK CASSIDY).

PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY SHORT / COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

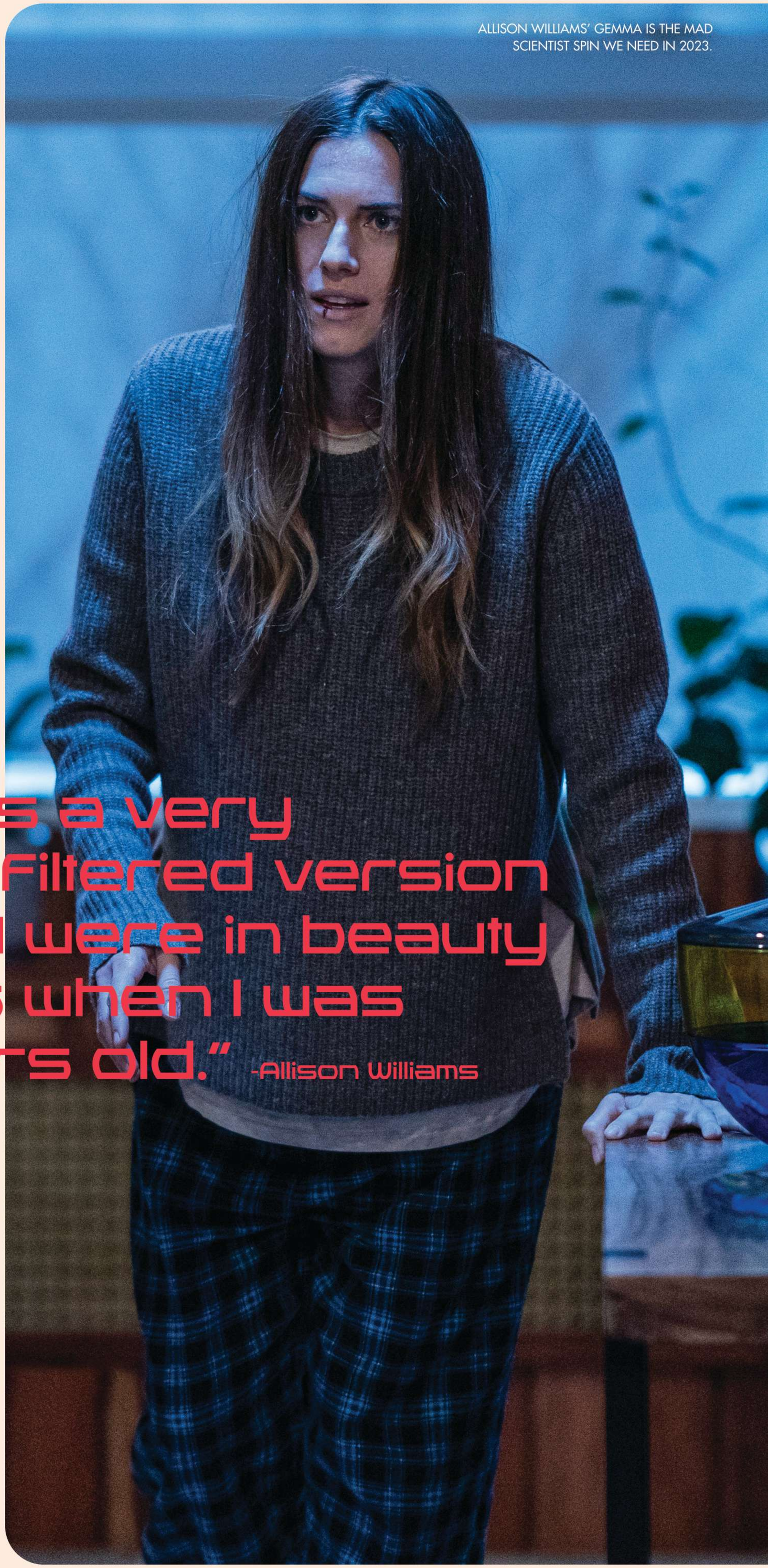
whether she was talking to me – no matter what the circumstances were, it was a deeply chilling experience." Having appeared on *Sesame Street* multiple times, Williams had some prior experience acting opposite puppets. "I've done scenes with Bert and Ernie and Oscar, and also in that case, you forget immediately that there's anyone else that's creating them," Williams says. "You just get sucked into this interaction with this… *being*."

But all the technical work that went into making the M3GAN magic happen did nothing to diminish the doll's inherent creepiness. "The scariest thing by far," Williams says, "was M3GAN in repose. M3GAN between takes. You expect her to suddenly be like, 'I'm sorry, I'm going to need a couple minutes, I need to go to the bathroom.'"

Just a few seasons into HBO's *Girls*, Williams' name became synonymous with her TV alter ego, Marnie Michaels. A millennial of the "pick me" variety who is somehow both exceedingly self-aware and pathologically unselfconscious, Marnie's an adult

> "[M3GAN] is a very airbrush-filtered version of me – if I were in beauty pageants when I was eight years old." -Allison Williams

horse girl who describes her dream wedding aesthetic as "Ralph Lauren and Joni Mitchell. Artistic, with a nod to my cultural heritage, which is white Christian woman." Williams says now of Marnie, "We were in such lockstep in terms of our stage of life in so many ways that it was very easy for people to think that we were essentially the same person." That perception is what inspired Jordan Peele to cast her as Rose Armitage in *Get Out*, which basically distilled the most uncomfortable parts of Marnie into an unforgettable modern movie villain. "That helped me feel like I was using people's preconceptions of me against


ALLISON WILLIAMS' GEMMA IS THE MAD SCIENTIST SPIN WE NEED IN 2023.

TESS (JEN VAN EPPS) TRIES TALKING SOME SENSE INTO THE M3GAN TEAM.

PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY SHORT / COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

them," Williams says, "because they would assume I was a good guy for as long as possible."

Playing Rose set Williams up to subvert expectations again in Richard Shepard's campy psychosexual thriller *The Perfection*. "After *Get Out*, I thought I definitely wouldn't have the benefit of the doubt again," she says. Like Peele's film, Williams explains that *The Perfection* works best if the audience can't decide whether or not her character – a former cello prodigy named Charlotte – is trustworthy. With the role of Gemma in *M3GAN*, Williams sensed another opportunity to play with expectations. "I thought that having all of those characters lurking around would be very helpful," she says, "particularly for the genre fans." Although *M3GAN* is her third outing in the horror genre, Williams doesn't assume that everyone who watches it will have seen her other movies. For those who have, she explains, "It's a really fun meta element to add to a movie because people don't see things in a vacuum."

Public perception can shape the trajectory of an actor's career, and it would have been easy to pigeonhole Williams as a "Marnie" type in a series of middling rom-coms. "The idea of using all of that and just going with it rather than fighting it, which I did for so long, is so much more fun," she says, "and it just keeps bringing me back to this genre that most of the time I'm too scared to watch, but I love working in."

> "It was tough sharing a screen with her... [she's] perfect in a way that's so upsetting to look at."
>
> -Allison Williams

Though Williams clearly enjoys working in the horror genre, she's hesitant to call herself a fan. "It's not that I don't like horror – I can't really remember a horror movie that I watched and didn't finish, for example – it's just that I find it terrifying in a way that my friends who identify as people who love horror don't," she explains. "They're watching it in a different way than I do. I get pulled in as if I'd never

made a movie before and I don't know that it's all fake."

Even though the genre has been thoroughly demystified for Williams the actor, Williams the audience member is still easily rattled. "When I see a paranormal movie I don't sleep for a week. Whenever I open my eyes and it's dark, I think I'm going to see something standing in the corner," she admits. "I never grew out of that, I never desensitized myself to that. Horror movies still impact me that much." Recently, Williams watched the trailer for *Smile* (*"the trailer,"* she emphasizes), and couldn't sleep that night. "It just destroys me and so I come at it with a lot of respect and kind of as a tourist." She may not be an expert, but Williams is definitely enamored with the genre. "I really have so much respect for the making of these movies," she says. "For any filmmaker, to have any kind of overwhelming emotional impact on someone watching your work is an achievement. It means that everything is operating together the way it should."

Williams prefers psychological thrillers, like Park Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden* ("I love love love it") and Alfred Hitchcock classics, because of the way they tend to linger in her brain. "I have trouble physically watching gore and I get nauseous really easily, but the psychological stuff definitely has a longer half-life in me," she says. "It changes the way I see things and live and operate and think. At its best, a really good psychological thriller or psychological horror movie can just eat its way into [you] and just changes the way you experience the world."

Like the best psychological thrillers, *M3GAN* takes a more nuanced view of human (and humanoid) behavior. "This is a movie that challenges any kind of absolute, any kind of dichotomy," Williams says. "It's much grayer than who's good and who's bad." The lone exception is Gemma's niece, Cady (*The Haunting of Hill House*'s Violet McGraw), whom Williams unequivocally describes as "an innocent." When she unexpectedly becomes a parental guardian to her orphaned niece, Gemma decides that Cady is actually the perfect product tester for the titular A.I. prototype. But M3GAN has a very extreme interpretation of her directive to protect Cady from harm.

In one scene, M3GAN charges at a would-be threat on all fours like a feral animal. In another, she wields a steel blade from one of those guillotine paper trimmers like the protagonist in a fantasy RPG. And did we mention the *dance*? "The script could have been interpreted in so many different ways," Williams says, "but Gerard always knew what it needed to be and what it needed to look like and how it needed to feel, and he executed perfectly on that."

Credit for the aforementioned script goes to Akela Cooper, the screenwriter behind James Wan's *Malignant* – a film that masterfully navigates a tonal maze to stake its rightful claim under the elusive banner of "camp classic." Despite being a self-confessed scaredy-cat, Williams loved *Malignant* and speaks admiringly of the screenwriter's encyclopedic knowledge of the horror genre. "She's a genius," says Williams. "This movie could not have had a better writer at the helm in terms of someone who really gets the assignment."

Williams didn't expect to find her niche in the horror genre, but she finds herself continually drawn to the stories and characters. "I just keep coming back because it keeps sending me projects that are really interesting and different," Williams explains. Another thing that keeps bringing her back to horror is the fans. "One of the great joys of making horror movies is the fan discourse afterwards – people dissecting it, people having commentary that we haven't even thought of that just deepens and enriches what we've made together," says Williams. "It makes for this whole other chapter of making these movies that is so enjoyable because it has a life that you have technically nothing else to do with. It belongs to other people, and at that point it becomes a very collaborative group project in a way that I absolutely love."

Based on the positive response to the teaser and all the memes flooding her timeline, Williams is eager for horror fans to see *M3GAN*. "When the trailer came out, it was so fun to see people taking her and running with it. People seem to get her," she says. "I can't wait for that to happen all over again when the movie comes out."

Williams pauses as if to contemplate her own optimism. When she speaks again, the tone of her voice is simultaneously ominous and playful: "I don't think she'll come and go quietly." 💀

M3GAN'S PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS ARE NEXT-LEVEL, AS CELIA (LORI DUNGEY) DISCOVERS.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

HUESERA: THE BONE WOMAN

Digs Up The Dark Side of Motherhood

By Michael Gingold

Michelle Garza Cervera's first feature is much more than a Mexican *Babadook*.

Typically, a woman becoming an expectant mother is a cause for joy. For Valeria (Natalia Solián), who had been once-vainly trying to conceive with her husband Raúl (Alfonso Dosal), it should be a reason to celebrate. Yet since Michelle Garza Cervera's debut feature *Huesera: The Bone Woman* is a horror film, we know that this blessed event will come to feel like a curse.

This isn't your typical there's-something-wrong-with-the-baby chiller, though. Instead, *Huesera: The Bone Woman* deals with the doubts about her impending motherhood that begin to creep into Valeria's mind, exacerbated by frightening visions that suggest a supernatural presence is haunting her. She begins to feel that this is not a life change she wants, which puts her at odds with her family, and with society in general. That conflict is transfixing as directed by Cervera, written by Cervera and Abia Castillo and performed by Solián, and it won the film a pair of awards at the Sitges Film Festival, and Cervera the Best New Narrative Director and Nora Ephron Prizes at the Tribeca Film Festival. It was at the latter event that FANGORIA spoke to the three women about *Huesera: The Bone Woman*, which is currently set for commercial release this February by XYZ Films.

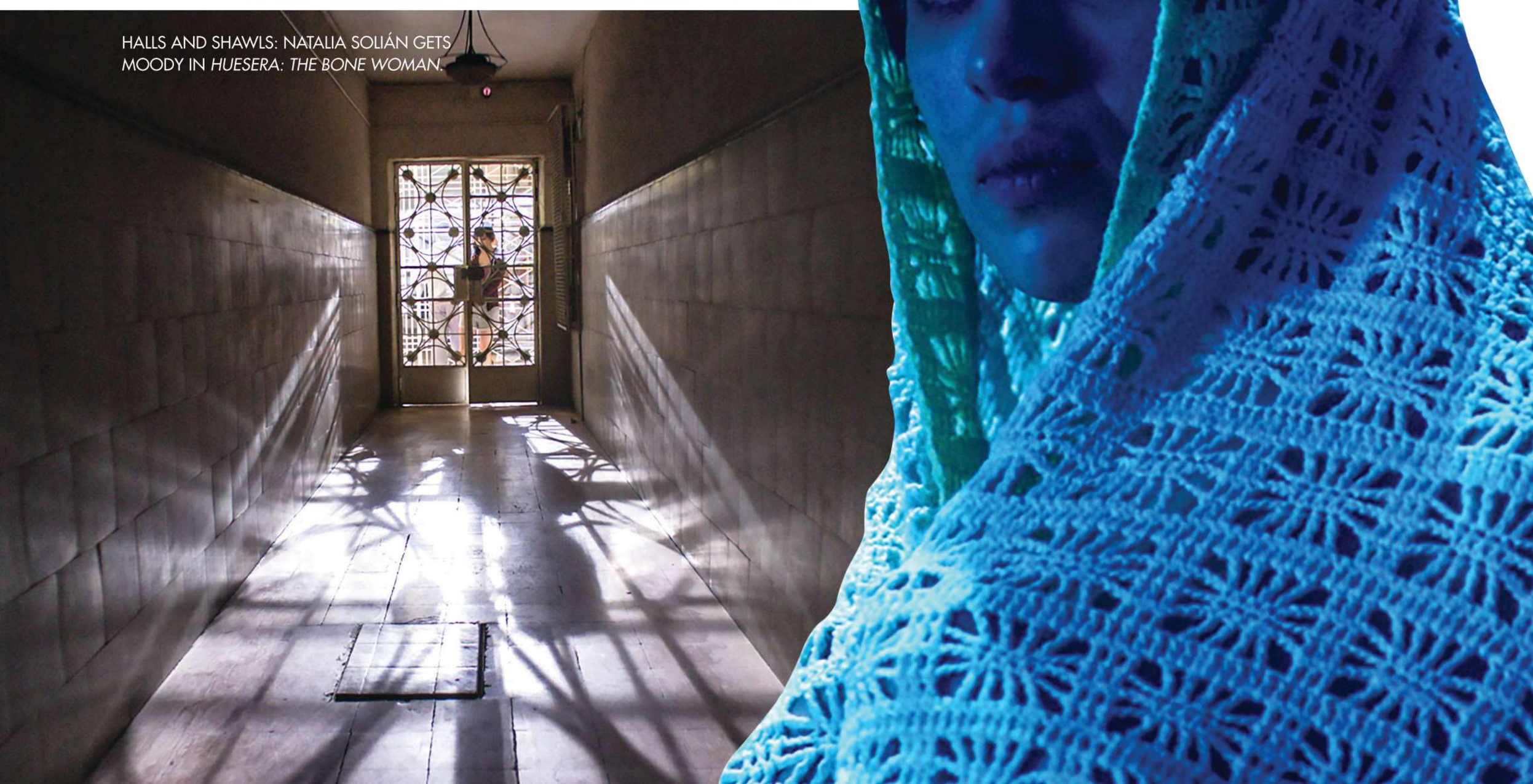
Not surprisingly, Cervera reveals that the movie has its roots in her own family background. "My grandmother was someone whose name I had never learned, and I could never ask questions about her. Then when I grew up, I found out that she was a woman who had left her family, and that's why she was like a black sheep, someone you could not speak about. When I finally got to ask about her life, her name, who she was, and I learned her story, it completely changed my idea of her, and my family history. To me, it's very powerful to have the chance to tell that story, even though it's a very different version of it — a very insane version. I felt like I needed to do a film on this subject, to look at this kind of person and try to understand her."

To prepare for *Huesera: The Bone Woman*, the director studied a number of horror films in which motherhood is a key theme, including the one that remains a pinnacle of that kind. "It's funny how *Rosemary's Baby*, for example, says that you can't think of your child as the devil; you have to stay, because the mother instinct wins over everything, you know?" she says. "To me, it was very important to say that that instinct is a social construction. We did a lot of research, and there were a lot of mothers involved in the film, and it's something that needs to be spoken about; we need to say that there's not just one experience of it. I really liked the idea of having a horror film that plays against this idea of the maternal instinct. I love films like *Aliens*, where Ripley is such a strong woman that her maternal instinct is going to win over everything. But for me, it was important to present a character who doesn't feel that instinct in that way."

Huesera: The Bone Woman's closest antecedent in presenting anti-motherhood themes through a horror lens is Jennifer Kent's acclaimed *The Babadook*, and Cervera acknowledges, "I love *The Babadook*, and it was such an inspiration. I loved that she used the genre to speak about social issues, like so many horror films, but proposed a new way to look at the subject of motherhood that we don't usually see in horror."

Cervera and Castillo first began writing the *Huesera* script in 2017, after they met while working at the same production company and Castillo sparked to Cervera's concept. "I've always wanted to explore motherhood," Castillo says, "because that's a subject that really touches me personally. I was struggling with making the decision

PHOTOS COURTESY OF XYZ FILMS



HALLS AND SHAWLS: NATALIA SOLIÁN GETS MOODY IN *HUESERA: THE BONE WOMAN*.

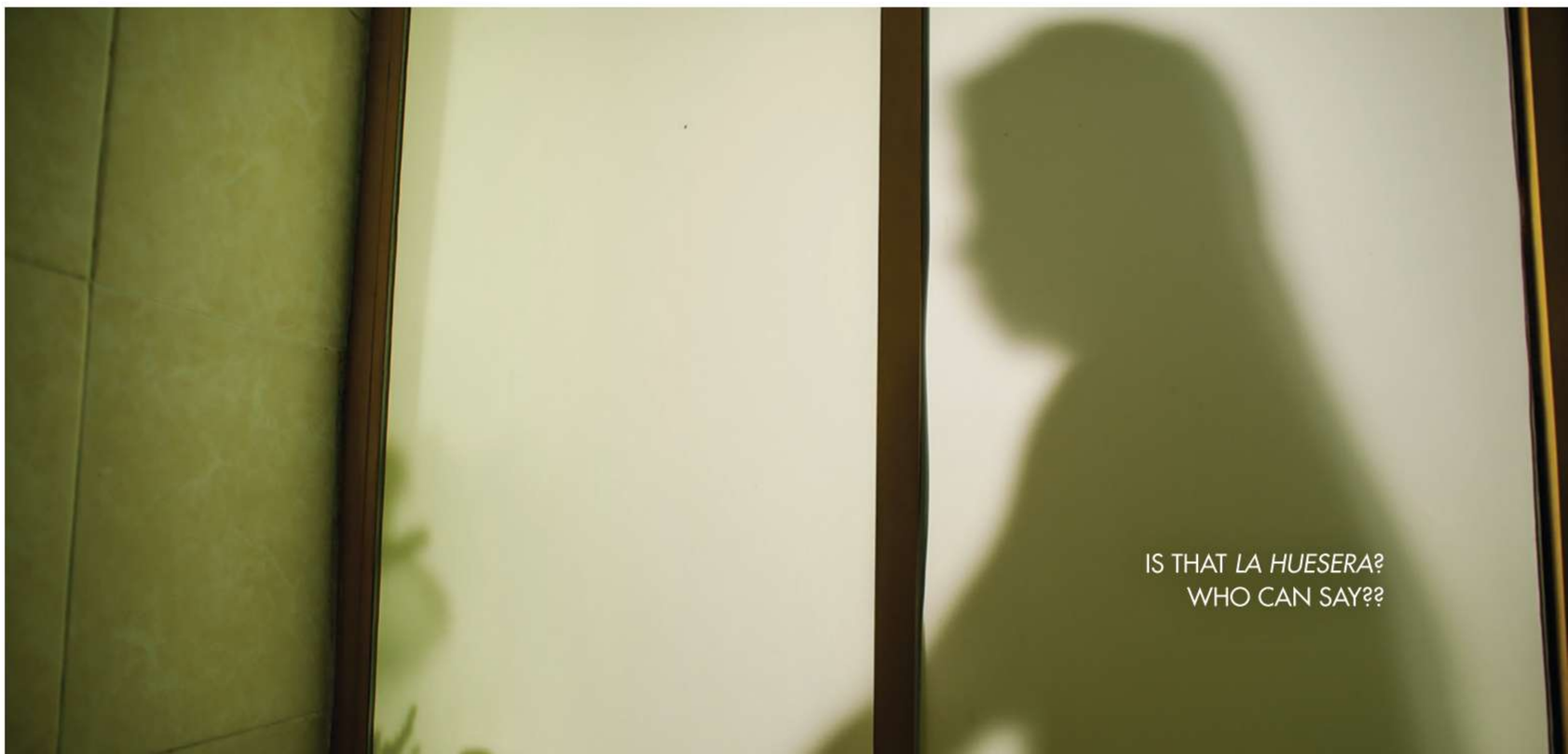
DON'T CALL IT A BABADOOK: REALITY BENDS IN *HUESERA: THE BONE WOMAN.*

"I've always wanted to explore motherhood, because that's a subject that really touches me personally... I really liked the idea of having a horror film that plays against this idea of the maternal instinct." -Michelle Garza Cervera

to be or not to be a mother, and the pressure that comes with saying yes or no all the time, so when I heard the idea, I got very excited. I believe the horror genre has allowed us to explore this very delicate subject in a meaningful way. It gives you the tools to take on a subject that is very difficult to speak about. And something else I really enjoyed, and that we really worked on in the story and script, was exploring the middle-class world of Mexico City. It has many colors, many different varieties, so it was very important to show this different kind of middle-class system."

As Valeria's doubts about her incipient birth become more pronounced — and are shared by her sister Vero (Sonia Couoh), who has never forgiven her for an incident involving Vero's baby years before — *Huesera: The Bone Woman* is laced with reminders of the past Valeria left behind to enter apparent domestic bliss with Raúl. We learn that she once ran with a punk crowd, including a lover named Octavia (Mayra Batalla), who comes back into Valeria's life to further complicate it.

"I've been involved in the punk scene since I was a teenager," Cervera says. "I played in many bands. For me, punk is much more than music; it showed me a new way to look at the world. It's like the glasses in *They Live*; once you put them on, there's no going back! So I loved the idea of bringing this to Valeria, who is going through



IS THAT *LA HUESERA*?
WHO CAN SAY??

this period of social questioning. In punk, you question everything, and Valeria now is trying to avoid that. It's like, no, don't look at that, keep that in the closet, don't touch that. And she gets pushed to look back at that past, when she was doubting and asking herself these kinds of questions, like, why am I taking this path? Am I entering this new life because of social and family pressure, or am I doing it because I really want to? So it was perfect to use the punk world that I am personally attached to for the character."

Throughout all this personal drama, the supernatural is always lurking on the sidelines. Although there are genuinely frightening moments throughout the movie, *Huesera* is not overt about its horrors very often, and doesn't even offer the typical exposition about its titular entity, the "bone woman" of Mexican legend. "We definitely didn't want to put in any information about *La Huesera*," Cervera confirms. "We wanted it to be an entity that evolves and transforms throughout the film, and goes along with Valeria's path. I didn't want it to be like, here are the rules of the monster; I wanted the entity to work for her emotional journey."

There is even the suggestion that the film's most horrific events are taking place only in the protagonist's mind, and Cervera adds, "We never wanted to say that *La Huesera* doesn't exist, but it comes out of Valeria's character; it belongs only to her. We have references to where the idea came from, but it's only seen by Valeria, you know?"

A great deal of the film's power derives from Solián's captivating embodiment of her complex character, and the actress notes that she, like her director, was able to bring her own experiences to the project. "I'm a mom, and there are so many social rules regarding motherhood — like, there's a right way to act as a mom. But then at the same time, you always have to deal with yourself, not losing your identity as a person. And that's something that is kind of a taboo; it's not very common or correct to say that you want to keep your identity and not lose yourself in the course of becoming a mother.

"This movie actually arrived at a moment in my life when I was going through a difficult time, being a young mom," Solián continues. "I was trying to find my new identity as a mother, and at the same time be biologically responsible, with the fact of having a child. In the middle of that process, I got this role, and it was very easy to connect with Valeria, because I was going through a similar conflict to the one she has in the film."

"Something that impressed me about Natalia was that I believed she was seeing *La Huesera*," Cervera says. "Like when we did the reading with her, I believed that she was seeing something horrible. We have the scene in which *La Huesera* takes over Valeria, and the baby is threatened and all that, where we really connected with the darker side of what the story's about — fighting the potential violence within yourself. When we were shooting that, we were both very emotional on set; the crew and cast were all silent and giving Natalia that moment. It felt kind of religious, and it was incredible; everybody said they were scared of her at that moment, and she even got red splotches all around her face from the effort she gave. And then the makeup people had to cover them for a week [*laughs*]!"

"It was like being in a trance," Solián adds. "The idea was so strong and so familiar to me that I could go deep into those areas of my mind that I didn't know I had."

The *Huesera: The Bone Woman* production won strong support from the Mexican Film Institute, and Cervera says, "I think we are lucky that we are in such a good moment for Mexico, where I feel like they're pushing for new voices. There are many films touching on feminist issues from Mexico directed by women, but not many in the genre. I can't wait to have more." 💀

PHOTOS COURTESY OF XYZ FILMS

VALERIA (NATALIA SOLIÁN), GETTING A BETTER LOOK AT *LA HUESERA* THAN YOU.

ROXANNE BENJAMIN TELLS US

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE CHILDREN

BY BRETT GALLMAN

The kids definitely aren't alright in the latest from Roxanne Benjamin, who has turned to a particularly twisted genre for her second feature film: the creepy kid picture. Horror has a long history of exploiting the uncanny sight of children committing violent acts onscreen, and it's especially bold whenever a filmmaker decides to revel in it as Benjamin does with *There's Something Wrong with the Children*, a title that heralds unrepentant, pint-sized mayhem.

When Ben (Zach Gilford) and Margaret (Alisha Wainwright) go on vacation with longtime friends Thomas (Carlos Santos) and Ellie (Amanda Crew), their idyllic country retreat is plagued by an unspoken tension. Thomas and Ellie's relationship has become strained, which is especially troubling because they have two kids, Lucy (Briella Guiza) and Spencer (David Mattle). Sensing that their friends might need some time alone, Ben and Margaret offer to let the kids stay overnight in their cabin, only to see their good intentions go awry when they wake up to find the kids missing. After a brief panic, Lucy and Spencer emerge from an eerie cave in the woods with a malevolent glimmer in their eyes, hellbent on completely wrecking this vacation.

For Benjamin, the draw to this Blumhouse Television project was simple. "I've always wanted to make an evil kids movie," she reveals, noting that she's often approached to work on projects involving motherhood

PHOTOS BY SAM LOTHRIDGE / COURTESY OF EPIX

and pregnancy. "I don't know if that's because I'm a woman, but people assume I'll know about these things, but I don't since I don't have kids and I've never been pregnant." However, *There's Something Wrong with the Children* provided a refreshing opportunity to explore this genre from the perspective of a couple that has entertained having children without committing. "It isn't necessarily about being a mother, but about the concept of motherhood and those decisions that people make at a certain age — that concept was really interesting to me," she says, before describing how she shaped the story into an unconventional take on this genre: "The script originally focused on someone who was very much trying to convince their partner to have kids, and I worked to get it to a place where it was about someone who was very conflicted about that idea."

The script, from *Intruders* and *V/H/S Viral*'s T.J. Cimfel and David White, also provided an opportunity for Benjamin to further upend genre conventions with its portrayal of Ben, whose history of manic episodes makes him a perfect target for the kids' devious exploits. Where horror films often reserve gaslighting for women, *There's Something Wrong with the Children* flips the script by having Lucy and Spencer torment Ben, whose ravings about the kids are hard to believe. "Gender-swapping the hysterical female was a fun trope to play with," Benjamin says, detailing the particular experiences she wanted to explore. "The idea that anyone who's needed some sort of help with mental health is just automatically almost dismissed — there was something really fun about turning that into a male character because it's not something we normally see."

Benjamin also credits the script's unique structure, which ultimately centers on Margaret, who's forced to confront her trepidation about having kids in the most horrific way imaginable. "It was a fun challenge making this a two-POV movie, which is not something I'd done before. We switch our perspective halfway through from Ben to Margaret and start to see things through her eyes, which is really fun," Benjamin tells FANGORIA.

The word "fun" comes up often during the conversation because it's something she embraced while making *There's Something Wrong with the Children*, starting with the title itself. "This originally had a different title," she explains. "That was something that I wanted to change because you know from the get-go that shit is going down with these kids. It's fun to get that out of the way and have the audience question how and when it's going to happen."

Where many creepy kid films are harrowing explorations of parental anxieties, this one invokes the gory thrills of vintage exploitation movies. When crafting the film's tone, Benjamin specifically looked to the films of the "early '70s, where they just let you know what kind of movie you're in for." Like her previous work, it blends unsettling imagery with an infectious energy, an approach she hopes also recaptures the thrills of childhood sleepovers. "I don't think I would be good at slow-burn horror. I have much more fun with roller coaster horror, or what I would call slumber party horror, that has you screaming with a group of people," she says. "I don't think it needs to take itself too seriously."

Benjamin also didn't want to grind this roller coaster to a halt by bogging the story down with needless mythology for the evil that possesses the children. She found that this conventional story structure wasn't necessary for *There's Something Wrong with the Children* because "this is a movie where no one tries to solve the problem. You've just got someone trying to convince people there is a problem and by the time anyone believes him, it's too late. At that point, it's just about survival."

The mayhem unfolds in a familiar location for Benjamin, who has often taken to the woods for her productions. "I love horror movies set in the woods. Anything that takes place outdoors only increases the stakes because it's already a place that isn't safe and takes you out of your element," she notes, adding that frequent musical collaborators The Gifted (Louis Castle and James Bairian) went in an "industrial direction" to accent the setting. "I've worked with them on every single movie I've ever done, and they're amazing. They brought something cool and interesting to this one."

The unrelenting approach still leaves room for her cast to shine, too, since Benjamin fosters a collaborative environment on-set and encourages her actors to develop chemistry through a rehearsal process. "Rehearsals are really big for me, which is not something you usually get to do on anything that's a lower budget," she says before explaining another crucial part of her creative process. "I also write up bios of the characters,

LOOKS LIKE MARGARET (ALISHA WAINWRIGHT) FOUND OUT WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE CHILDREN.

DIRECTOR ROXANNE BENJAMIN (LEFT) PUTS ALISHA WAINWRIGHT THROUGH IT, WITH THE HELP OF CHANTELLE CALMES.

and send those out as well to each one of the cast members, which is fun because I come from a writing background." She credits her cast for being up to the task and embracing a process that results in natural performances. "I was very lucky with the cast. They had an all-in attitude about jumping into the material."

Benjamin's commitment to character and chemistry development pays off in an unconventionally unsettling scene about halfway through the movie. Throughout the film, each couple gossips about the other, and the tension erupts when the drama inevitably spills over, leaving the audience cringing as these longtime friends have a spat. "That's one of my favorite scenes in the movie," she reveals, once again crediting her past influences. "I have some roots in mumblecore so I feel like a lot of that rubbed off on the emotions and relationships being raw."

Then there are the the children of the title, who gleefully twist the film's anxious emotional and psychological energy into the visceral shocks expected from this genre. Benjamin raves about Guiza and Mattle, calling them "total pros" as they brought this devious duo to life. "They're very perceptive, and both of them are emotional sponges," she says, before detailing how they were just as important to building the cast's chemistry alongside their adult co-stars: "Everyone is so good with kids to begin with, and Zach was a camp counselor once. I think that really put them at ease, and they got very close. I think they felt like part of the group."

There's Something Wrong with the Children premieres on Epix/MGM+ in January. 💀

SPENCER (DAVID MATTLE) AND LUCY (BRIELLA GUIZA) DO THEIR PART TO DEMONSTRATE WHY KIDS ARE THE WORST.

TOM SAVINI'S

Special Make-Up Effects Program

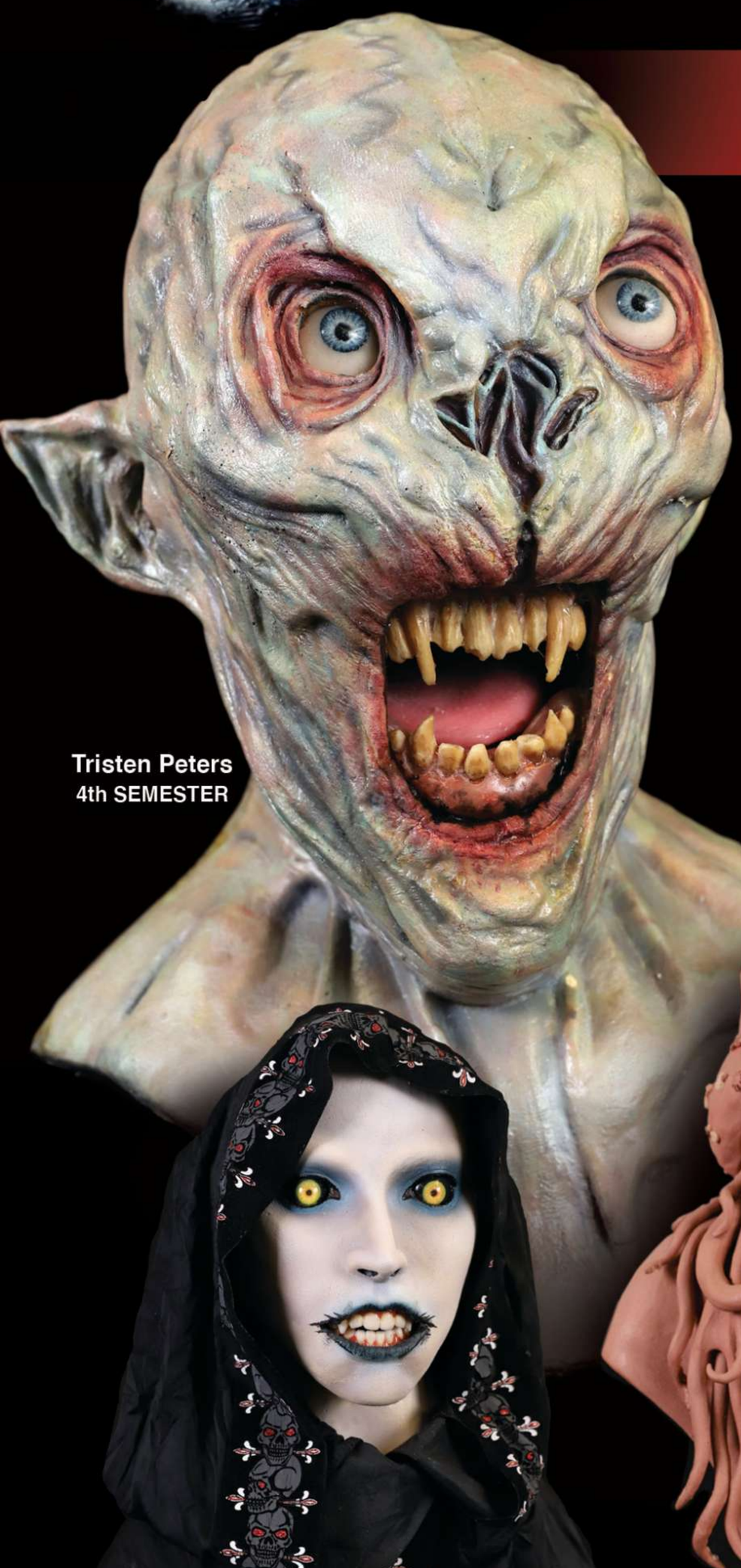
AT DOUGLAS EDUCATION CENTER

MAKE YOUR MONSTER

Become a practical effects artist in Tom Savini's Special Make-Up Effects Program. This 16-month Associate Degree Program teaches you every aspect of special make-up effects… Everything from design, anatomy, sculpting and mold making to casting, painting, finishing, creating eyes and teeth and computer sculpting in Zbrush. Graduates work as professional effects artists in FX Shops, Television, Film, Medical Prosthetics, Haunted Attractions and Theater. The list goes on and on!

16-MONTH *DEGREE PROGRAM COVERING:

- Cosmetic Make-Up
- Sculpting
- Creature Design
- Painting Techniques
- Appliance Prosthetics
- Hair & Beard Application
- Airbrush Illustration
- Budgets
- Character Make-Up
- Eyes and Teeth
- Animatronics
- Life Casting
- Mold Making
- Anatomy
- Props
- ZBrush



Tristen Peters
4th SEMESTER

"Our students' attitude is 'This is school?'... because they are having so much fun making their dreams come true creating monsters and make-up effects... plus... **THEY GET A DEGREE!**"*

Asher Green
4th SEMESTER

Calynn Von Grunelius-Lechner
3rd SEMESTER

Elyse Walker
4th SEMESTER

Sam McBride
4th SEMESTER

STUDENT GALLERY AT: **DEC.EDU/TS**

DOUGLAS
Education Center
130 Seventh Street • Monessen, PA 15062

1.800.413.6013 **DEC.EDU**

Housing is available through Boss Development, Inc. · www.bdihousing.com
Financial aid is available to those who qualify. *16-month Associate in Specialized Business Degree Program.
Tom Savini will award a "Certificate of Excellence" to those graduates with exceptional portfolios!
THIS SCHOOL IS AUTHORIZED UNDER FEDERAL LAW TO ENROLL NONIMMIGRANT ALIEN STUDENTS.

The Saw is Excalibur

HOW THE LEGENDARY TRAILER FOR

Leatherface

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III

CAME TO BE

BY AMANDA REYES • ILLUSTRATION BY GARY PULLIN

A man stands by a lake, his back to the camera. A soft musical score complements the serenity surrounding him.

V.O.: Some tales are told, then soon forgotten. But a legend… is forever.

The camera pans over to the lake. The music swells as the tip of an enormous chainsaw peeks out from the murky brown depths. A bejeweled hand emerges, clutching the base of the machine, but soon throws it, spinning, into the air. The man by the lake catches the chainsaw and holds it over his head as lightning strikes it. The man swiftly whirls towards the camera, revealing that he is Leatherface. A scream is heard in the background as the camera closes in on his face.

The screen goes black, and a bloodied, scratchy font reveals the title, with the words "THE SAW IS FAMILY" slicing through the bottom of the screen inside the blade of a chainsaw.

V.O.: *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*. Now, from the producers of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the real terror begins.

FADE OUT.

The Saw is Family

Sometimes, there is truth in advertising. A legend was born the day the trailer for *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* premiered in theaters. However, it wasn't exactly what the producers of the 1990 film had in mind. Acquiring the rights to the *Chainsaw* series, New Line hoped to capitalize on a familiar movie monster's potential franchise appeal, and instead created a trailer that people still talk about today.

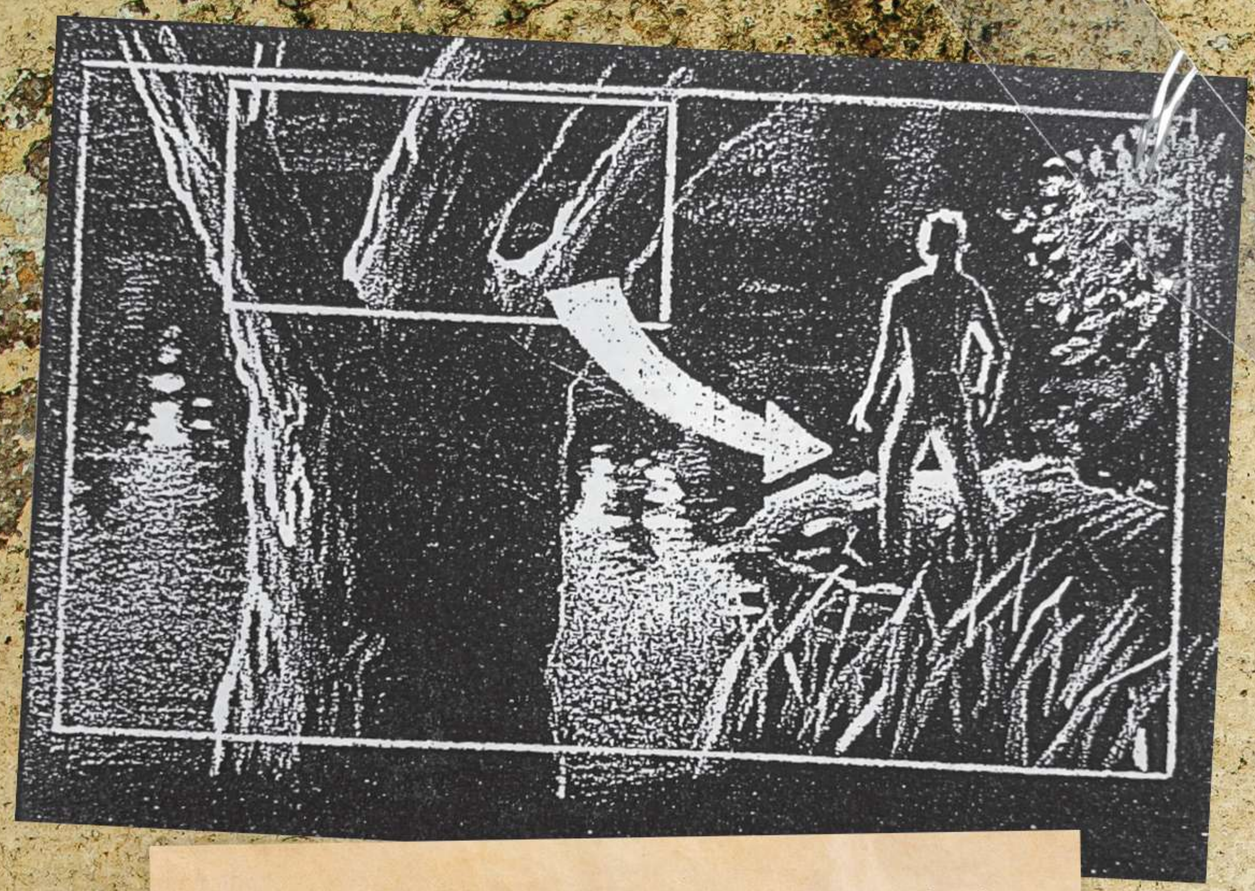
Cleverly weaving in imagery from *Excalibur*'s Lady of the Lake, *Leatherface*'s promo spot runs slightly over one glorious minute, and it left a mighty impression on many a horror lovers' minds that year. It was shot before the film went into production, which wasn't unusual. In an article published in *Variety* in 1990, "Trailers: The Big Business of Drawing Crowds" author Faye Brookman spotlights the wild and woolly world of blockbuster trailer cutting. Brookman notes that the average moviegoer sees approximately 72 trailers a year, but often cannot recall any of them within just mere minutes of viewing. The trailer shop's job, then, is to craft something memorable, and this was often accomplished through a handful of extremely competitive specialty companies.

The task of creating that unforgettable *Leatherface* teaser fell onto the shoulders of a company called the Cimarron Group (which went on to create marketing materials for the 2003 *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* remake, as well). Cimarron was established in 1979 by a man named Robert Farina. Prior to founding his business, Farina worked for Warner Bros. producing trailers, and is the man behind the infamous theatrical promo for *The Exorcist*.

The trailers for *The Exorcist* and *Leatherface* are comparable. Both lull viewers into a state of complacency as they lean back in their seats, not ready for what's about to unfold before their eyes. Each trailer then takes a hard left, flipping the calm into shock, without revealing much about the film itself. Both are intriguing and captivating, and they succeed with the tried and true approach of "less is more."

While Cimarron brought the Lady of the Lake parody to life for *Leatherface*, the campaign wasn't their idea. The first kernel of the E*xcalibur* theme was born out of the script, which was already in the works.

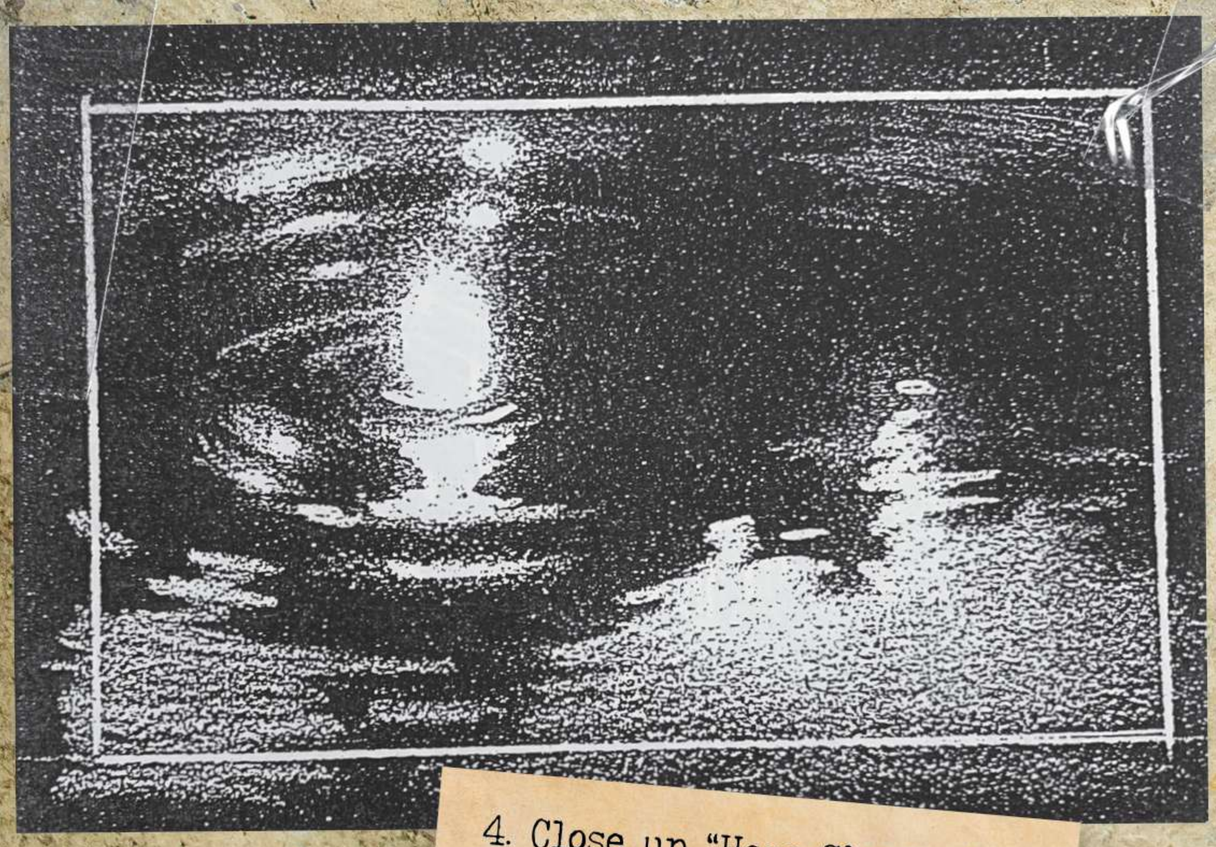
Screenwriter David J. Schow fondly recalls where it all began. "I remember the inspiration very well, since it was [executive producer] Mike De Luca's idea, and he got the notion directly from the very first draft of the script, dated March 15th, 1989."



1. Camera moves past tree, thru shrub, to find lone figure standing facing lake.

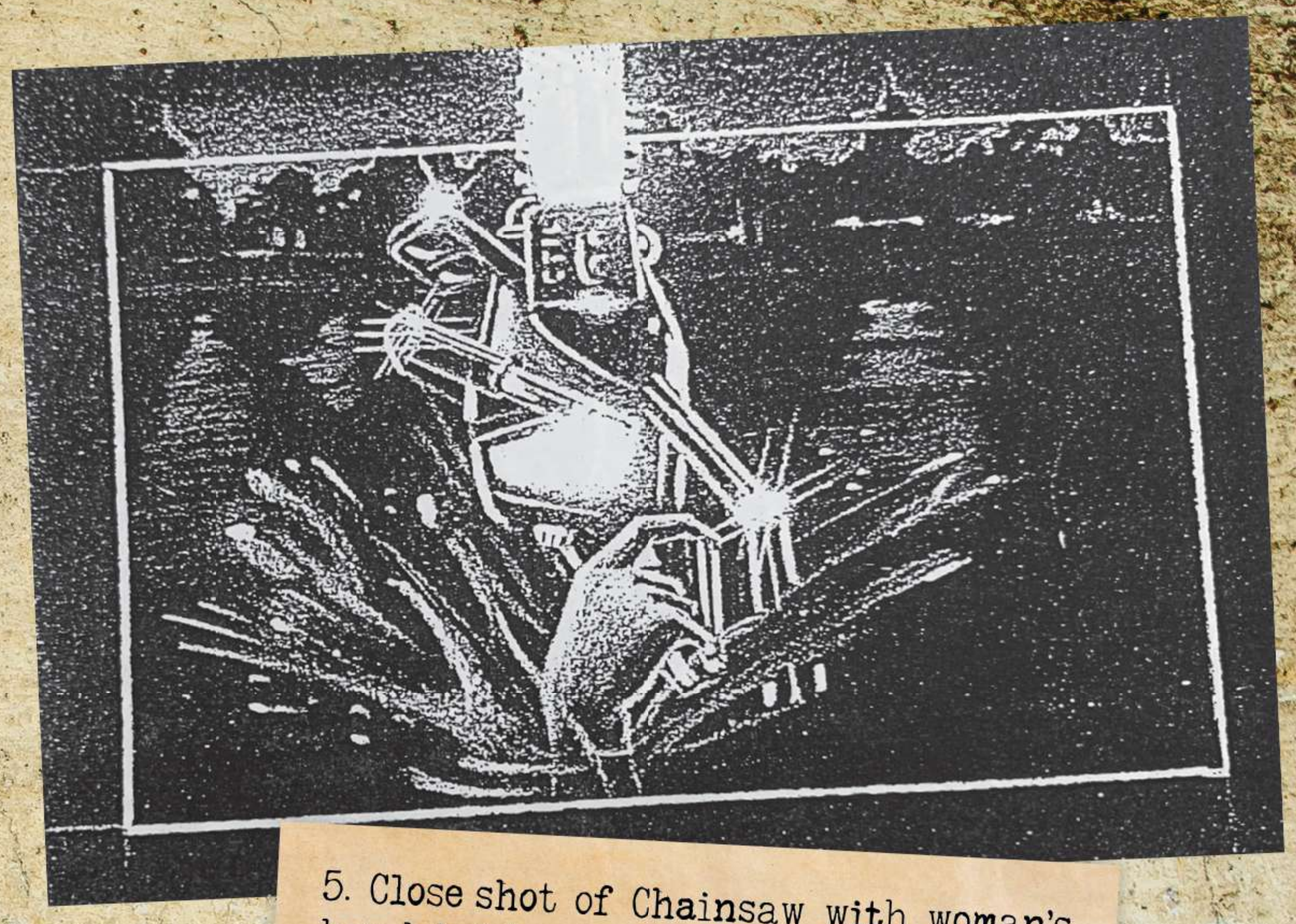
2. We continue moving to figure.

3. We continue move to figure and see "something" breaking surface of water.

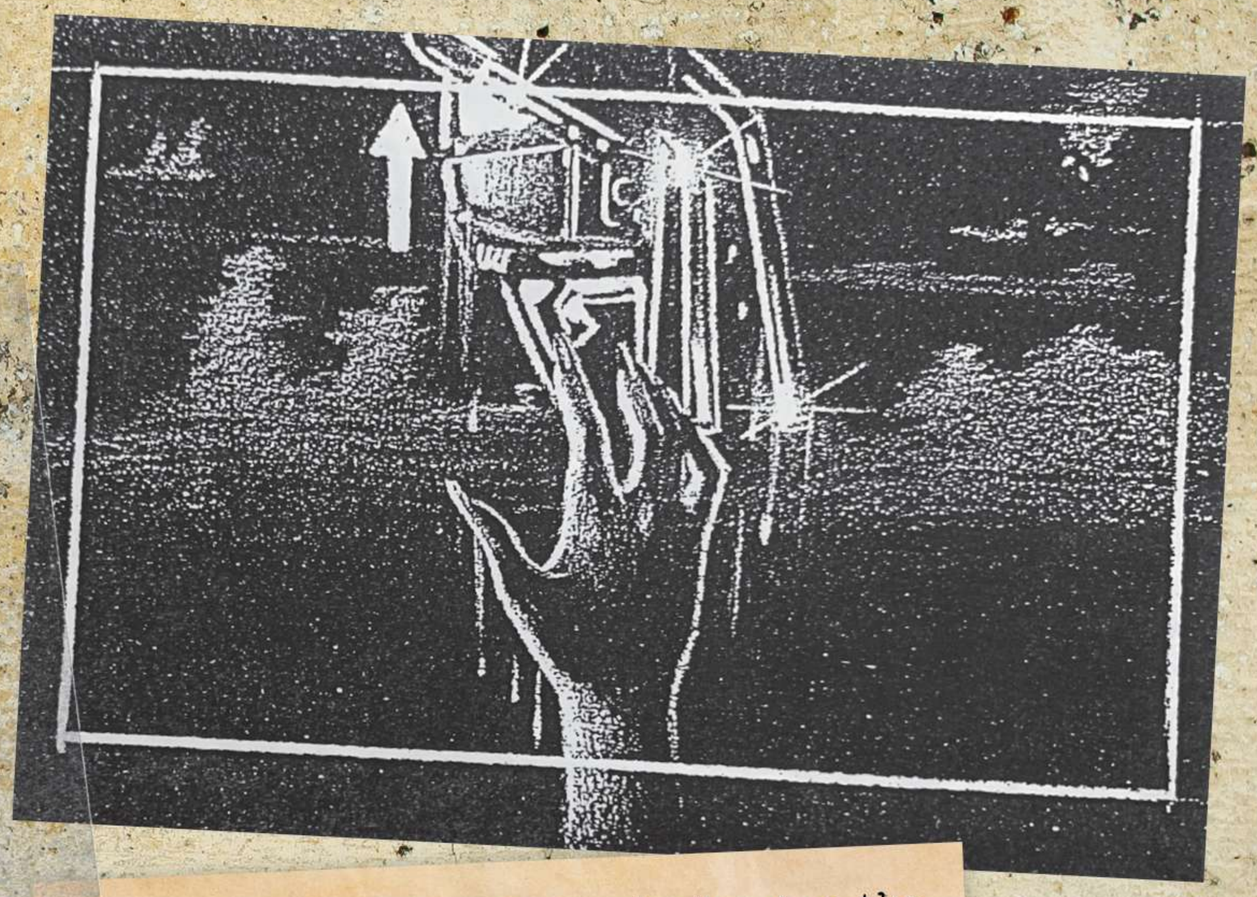


4. Close up "Hero Shot" of Chainsaw going thru frame.

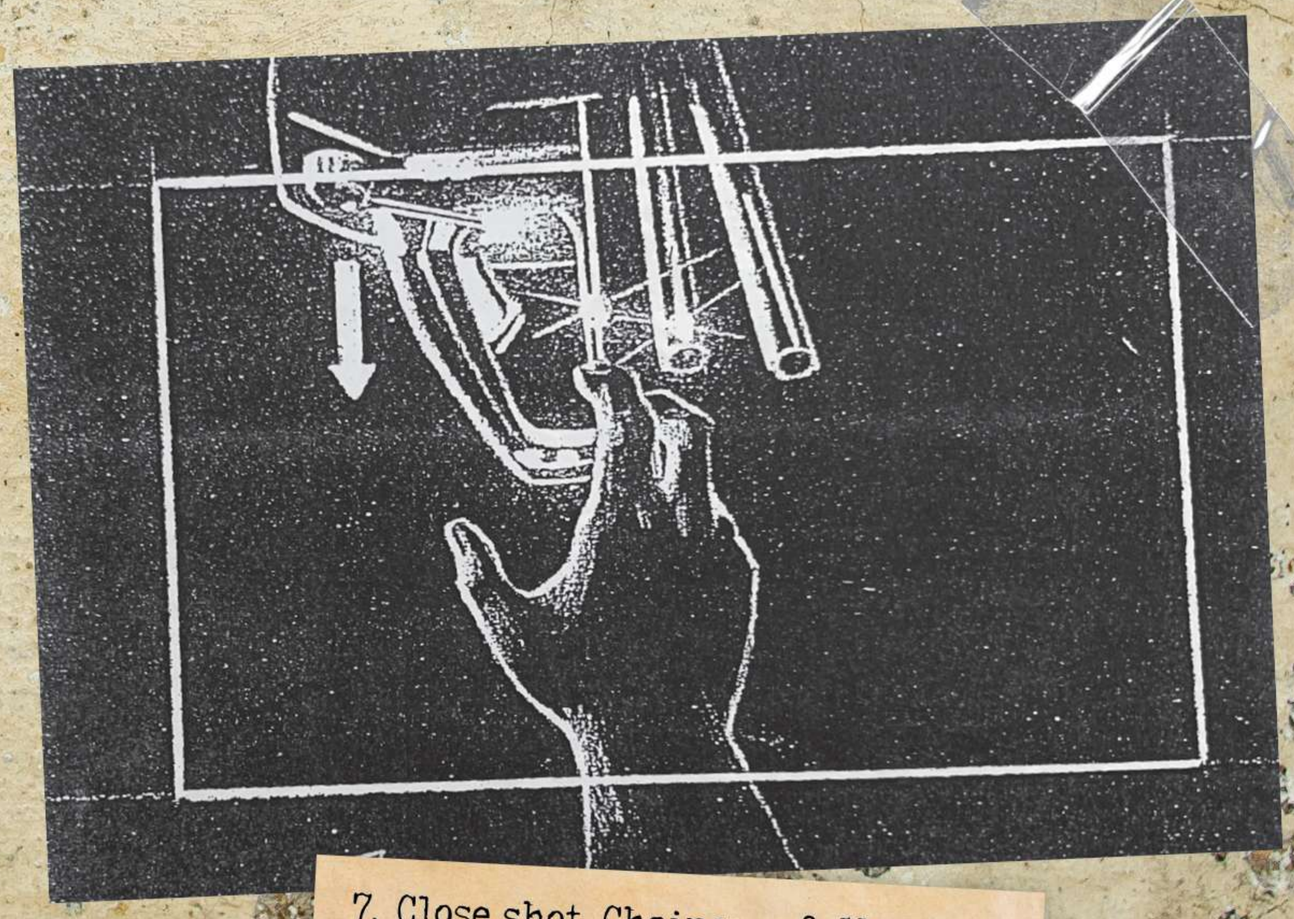
IMAGES COURTESY OF JEFF BURR



5. Close shot of Chainsaw with woman's hand holding saw as it rushes upward.



6. Close shot of woman's hand releasing the Chainsaw as it continues to move upward.



7. Close shot Chainsaw falls down into frame with a man's hand waiting to catch it.

Schow, who'd been working on the screenplay since January of 1989, shares the section which gave life to the trailer:

Originally, Ryan and Michelle first see the "Terror Truck" at the gas station, where they meet Tex but don't see Leatherface (yet):

Page 21: Ryan only half-hears this as he CHINS-UP to peer into the truck bed. Sees Alfredo's chainsaw. Mounted over a wheel well on a special rack is an enormous TOTALLY CHROMIUM CHAINSAW with glittering TITANIUM TEETH. The blade flat is ornately ENGRAVED. Like Excalibur. In the center are the words: THE SAW IS FAMILY."

Schow adds that the *Excalibur* reference appears in other drafts, as well. De Luca loved the allusion and went to Cimarron with the concept. And, while it's clearly lampooning the Lady of the Lake, De Luca added an extra layer of cunning humor to the promo spot by hiring the company who cut the trailer for John Boorman's extravagant 1981 film *Excalibur*!

For many a moon, lovers of the Valencia-shot promo thought Leatherface was played by Kane Hodder, best known to the horror world as Jason Voorhees in several *Friday the 13th* entries. But Leatherface isn't played by Hodder, nor is it stuntman Bob Elmore, who's also often credited with the role. Like King Arthur's sword, here we have another myth in the making: to this day no one knows exactly who plays Leatherface in the trailer! Schow says of the mystery, "I wish I knew more about the trailer, per se, [but I don't recall] because right around the same time I got to play Freddy – well, part of him – in the trailer to *Nightmare on Elm Street 5*."

And the connection to Hodder seems like a natural leap, as he served as stunt coordinator on *Leatherface*, as well as stand-in to the film's lead, played by R.A. Mihailoff. Plus, of course, Hodder was the star of the equally iconic "I Love New York" trailer for *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan*. And, naturally, images of someone rising from a lake, even if it's only a hand, conjure up thoughts of Jason Voorhees. Perhaps, then, it comes as no surprise that the infamous Lady of the Lake was actually a Lad of the Lagoon! A male diver was brought in for the difficult shoot. Schow explains, "The 'lake' was more like a puddle – so shallow that the diver had to lay down prone, forcing them to break the reveal, and the saw, into two parts to get the shot." This meant that two facsimile saws were crafted specifically for the shoot, and are not the tools used in the film.

In a funny connection to Schow's own trailer performance, *Leatherface* director

Jeff Burr remembers, "I first saw the trailer in front of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 5*, at the then-Mann's Chinese theater, the main one, which is a huge theater. The theater was about half full, and I was a few days from starting to shoot *Leatherface*. The trailer comes on, and when Leatherface is revealed at the end of the trailer the crowd cheers and goes nuts! I then think to myself, 'Motherfucker, we have a hit on our hands,' as did the New Line executives. Little did we know it would be an incredibly bumpy road ahead!"

Burr is accurate about the film's tumultuous journey from script to screen. After *Leatherface* endured a series of cuts to remove the X rating the MPAA was pushing on the film, it hit theaters in January of 1990. Like Tobe Hooper's own follow-up in 1986, this sequel was met with mixed reviews and a disappointing box office return. However, time has been very kind to the film, which is now frequently considered one of the best sequels to the never-ending roster of *Chainsaw* follow-ups that continue today.

Ever since its outrageous trailer was unleashed on unsuspecting horror fans, rumors and stories about the production have taken on a life of their own, as fans continue to watch the trailer on YouTube and discuss it on Reddit, well over three decades after it was shot. And that, my friends, is classic moviemaking. 💀

8. Shoulder shot of lone figure holding Chainsaw.

9. Long shot of lone figure with Chainsaw. Lightning hits saw; it starts up and sparks fly from exhaust pipes.

10. As Chainsaw is running, the figure turns violently toward camera, brings blade in front of him, revealing LEATHERFACE.

The *Leatherface* trailer left a deep, bloodied impression on fans, including many luminaries in the genre world. Here's what a few of them thought:

Stephen Graham Jones
(author, *My Heart is a Chainsaw*; Fango scribe):

"'Epic' is the word I want to use for this trailer, except it only has four letters, no exclamation point, and isn't in bold, so it's not nearly a loud enough word. The real question here is who is this strange woman lying in that pond? I'm thinking she's probably the Yellow Rose of Texas. Who else could grant someone a chainsaw like this?"

Michael Varrati
(screenwriter, *Dracula: The Original Living Vampire*, *Tales of Poe*; Fango scribe):

"I could not help but be tickled by the playful audacity of the *Leatherface* trailer poking fun at *Excalibur*. Following on the heels of *Chainsaw 2*'s sheer manic energy, the lean into parody felt less like a stretch and more of a wicked *'game on!!'* declaration. Certainly a far cry from the original's grim origins, but who says you can't play a little?"

C. Courtney Joyner
(screenwriter, *Prison*, *The Offspring*; and film historian):

"The *Excalibur* trailer for *Chainsaw III* is a master-stroke of marketing; it's tongue clearly in bloody cheek, and if you get the joke, then you'll get every bit of Jeff Burr's wonderfully eccentric mini-epic."

Daniel Farrands
(screenwriter, *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*):

"I remember thinking, 'It's the *Excalibur of Chainsaw* movies.' I also thought, 'That's the biggest chainsaw I ever… *saw*.'"

Mark Lawson
(actor, *Killer Contractor*; writer and director, *Peek-A-Boo*):

"The trailer came out, I think, the same year the community theater back home was doing *Camelot*. So I was already nerding for the Arthurian Legend. The Lady of the Lake [was] stoking all of my tweener romantic idealism… to then be confronted with the cannibal behemoth?! Take all my hard-earned lawn-mowing money. This trailer set a bar that was hard to achieve."

Darin Scott
(screenwriter, director, producer, *Dark House*, *Stepfather 2*, *Tales from the Hood*):

"The first time I saw this trailer I jumped up, pumped my fist, and yelled *'He's back!!!'*"

Jason Baker
(makeup FX artist and mask maker, *The Black Phone*):

"I first saw this trailer on a VHS copy of Robert Englund's *Phantom of the Opera*. I loved it so much, I rewound the tape and watched it again. I remember being so excited because, in my mind, Leatherface was going to have a magic Excalibur-esque chainsaw in the next film. I was 7."

Matt Gourley
(podcast host, *With Gourley and Rust*):

"I was old enough to have seen *Texas Chain Saw Massacre 1* and *2*, as well as *Excalibur*, but not sophisticated enough to really understand the strange bedfellows of horror and camp. This left me even more confused. But of course that meant I wanted answers. Nice job, trailer!"

TEN GHOULISH TRAILERS

By "Ghoulish" Gary Pullin

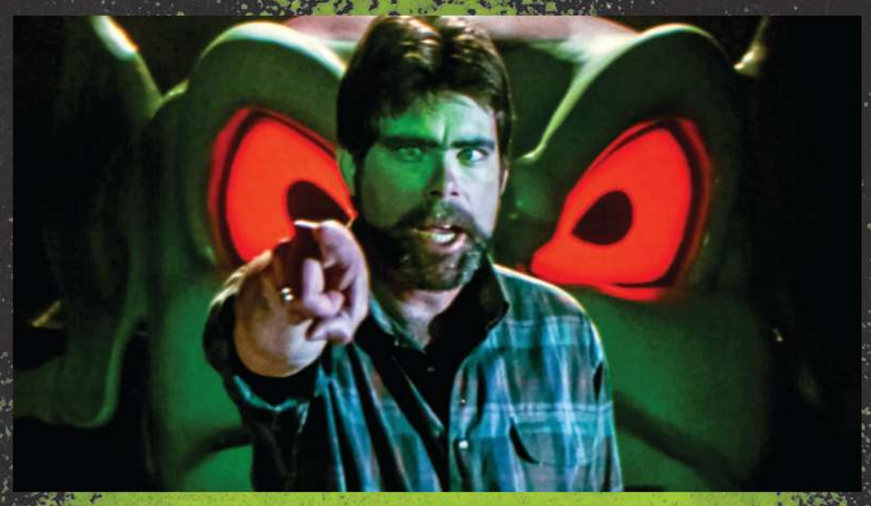
This issue's cover artist shares his list of all-time great horror previews.

A good horror trailer recognizes the opportunity to capture the audience's attention, giving them enough fuel to let their imaginations create their own nightmares. I don't want a barrage of spoilers to hook me in. A clever tagline, a perfect soundtrack, and some choice imagery to set the mood are all that's needed to feel that ideal mixture of dread and excitement.

Now that FANGORIA has established *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* as one of the best horror movie trailers of all time, here are a few other choice cuts, hand selected by yours truly.

1 Maximum Overdrive

Stephen King boldly exclaims that he's "going to scare the hell out of you!" And I believed him! Of course, the movie didn't turn out to be all that scary, but that doesn't mean I was disappointed. *Maximum Overdrive* may not be high art, but it is one hell of an entertaining ride.



2 Jaws

John Williams' infamous score accompanies underwater POV shots, and razor-sharp narration evokes pure horror. One trailer warns that *Jaws* may be too intense for young viewers, but we know the movie scared everybody out of the water.

3 Friday the 13th

Sean Cunningham's audacious ad in *Variety* helped get *Friday the 13th* off the ground, and the ad's image of the film title smashing through the glass towards the viewer in glorious three dimensions is used to great effect in the trailer. Can't get enough of Harry Manfredini's chilling score.

4 The Blair Witch Project

The found footage trailer featuring Heather Donahue apologizing and sobbing from terror is still convincing and haunting as hell. The marketing campaign behind this movie was pure genius.

5 It's Alive

I'm hesitant about peering into baby carriages, thanks to this trailer. The lullaby is unsettling.

6 The Shining

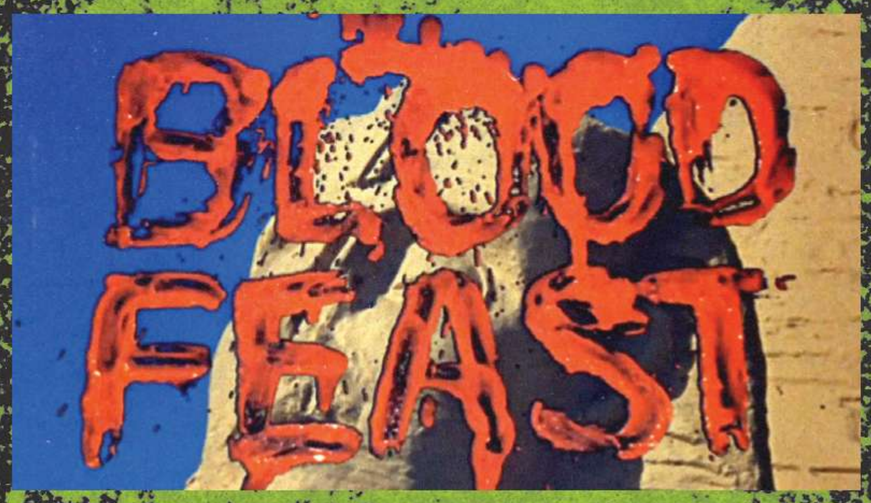
A terrifying lesson in simplicity. The nightmarish geyser of blood coming out of the elevators is something you don't forget.

7 A Nightmare On Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors

An atmospheric trailer that uses a red tricycle and the infamous Freddy nursery rhyme to build suspense. Featuring NO footage from the film, viewers only see Freddy's arm. Fun fact: the voice at the end of the trailer is not Robert Englund.

8 Blood Feast

The sacrificial sounds of tribal drums and cuts of bright red gore are mesmerizing. I love the bloody title treatment, too.



9 Dawn of the Dead

I still get goosebumps watching this. The narration scrolling over the horizon with dread-inducing music by Goblin is perfection.

10 Twilight Zone: The Movie

I loved this trailer when I was a kid, and I couldn't wait to see this anthology. It's a minimalist concept that works without clips by focusing on an atmospheric starry night and the iconic *Twilight Zone* theme song.

GOING OFF THE RAILS WITH COCAINE BEAR

BY PHIL NOBILE JR.

DIRECTOR ELIZABETH BANKS ON CURVEBALL CAREER CHOICES, THE JOYS OF PRACTICAL EFFECTS, AND HOW HER INSANE NEW HORROR COMEDY SMUGGLES A MESSAGE AMIDST THE MAULING.

There's probably a meaty thesis to be written that explores why animal attack movies are often so damn funny. From the winking *Jaws* nods of Joe Dante's *Piranha*, to Betty White treating a 32-foot killer crocodile like a stray cat in *Lake Placid*, to Samuel L. Jackson lamenting his fatigue over the eponymous snakes on his plane, and back around to Jerry O'Connell's "They took my penis!" in Alexandre Aja's *Piranha* remake, fans and filmmakers alike often find big lulz in toothy and/or taloned agents of nature taking mankind down a peg.

Why? That's a thinkpiece for another time, but one thing we know here and now is that this year's entry into the subgenre, *Cocaine Bear*, continues the proud tradition of mashing up onscreen laughs with *severe* animal violence. Starring Keri Russell (*Antlers*), Margo Martindale (*Justified*), Alden Ehrenreich (*Solo*), Kristofer Hivju (*Game of Thrones*), O'Shea Jackson Jr. (*Godzilla: King of the Monsters*), Scott Seiss (the viral comedian in his feature debut) and the late Ray Liotta, the film's Irwin Allen-esque disaster movie cast generates giddy excitement even before, as so eloquently phrased by my publicity contact at Universal, "a wild bear gets his hands on a ton of cocaine and rips everybody right the fuck up."

FANGORIA chatted with director Elizabeth Banks (*Pitch Perfect 2*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Movie 43*) right after watching the film's red-band trailer in mid-November, on the eve of social media platform Twitter seemingly self-destructing. By the time you read this the dust will have settled one way or another, but Ms. Banks agreed with us that, in the age of movies becoming viral sensations (à la *Malignant* and *M3GAN*), it'd be a damn shame to unleash the hilarious, gory, and eminently meme-able *Cocaine Bear* on a world without social media.

Are you watching Twitter die this week?

I'm watching. Is it dying, though? I feel like there's the *schadenfreude* of everyone in the world saying, 'It's going down, say goodbye,' and gleefully cheering on its demise. And then they're all still on it the next day.

Addiction is no joke! I ask because I was thinking about *Cocaine Bear* during all the Twitter chaos. The premise of this film – drug smugglers misplace a large quantity of cocaine in the Southern wilderness, and a bear who ingests it goes on a gory rampage – is something that's really going to thrive on social media. *Cocaine Bear* is going to explode if there's still a Twitter when this trailer drops.

I hope that you're right about that. It's definitely meme-able, that's for sure. I think *Cocaine Bear* feels very pop culture-ish in a great way, and it's what drew me to it as well. It's also why I definitely made sure that the studio was not going to retitle the movie once we started going.

It's, uh, a catchy title. "Meme-able" feels like a double-edged sword, though; one assumes that a group of talented artists doesn't come together and shoot in the woods for two months just to be turned into GIFs.

I actually don't know if that's not the case anymore. *[laughs]* Look, you have to have the product to back it all up. I don't want this to be *reduced* to anything, of course, but I also think that if people's interests are piqued, they will not be disappointed when they go to

VEST (J.B. MOORE) SEES RED.
AND SMELLS AND TASTES IT, PROBABLY.

PHOTOS BY PAT REDMOND / COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

the theater. I really believe I made a movie that lives up to the title. If you're excited to see a movie called *Cocaine Bear*, I think you'll be delighted by this movie.

You've spent some time in genre; you did *Brightburn* with David Yarovesky, and you worked with James Gunn on *Slither*. But it still feels a bit like a curve ball that this movie is coming from you.

I think there's a myth out there that women aren't interested in doing these things, and I partially just wanted to prove that mythology wrong. You can let people tell these stories who maybe you didn't think would want to tell these stories.

Fair, but even within your own eclectic CV, this is a pretty hard turn.

I think it partly was for that reason. I find that I've never been too comfortable being put in boxes and that every time I get to a sort of comfortable place in my career, I think I get like, 'Eh. We gotta do something new.' I need something different. I want to learn a new set of skills.

And *Cocaine Bear* certainly offered that, just in terms of FX.

This movie was a huge visual effects endeavor, because there's no actual bear in the film. It was all digitally designed and rendered. We had a bear performer named Alan Henry who did motion capture. And I worked with Weta Digital on the bear creation.

There's something inherently fun and often hilarious about "when animals attack" movies, whether it's *Piranha*, whether it's *Alligator*, whether it's *Lake Placid*. Where is this movie's DNA in terms of that lineage?

The real touchpoint for us, at first, was *Jaws*. There's something out there. Nobody believes it. It's too crazy to be true. Everybody's walking right into its path without knowing it. And that sense that the characters are in over their heads is what really drew me to this.

But it's mostly a tone thing for me. I've always loved horror, but I've always

OFFICER REBA (AYOOLA SMART) COMES FACE TO NO-LONGER-A-FACE WITH THE END RESULT OF A BEAR FULL OF BLOW.

laughed at it. When I go on a roller coaster, I immediately start giggling. That feeling of being taken on the ride of a horror movie is the same: that feeling in the pit of your stomach, the drop, the suspense, and then the sort of climax of the scene – I find that all to be hilariously funny.

And I loved the idea that this bear – and nature itself – is something that humans have this intense hubris about. 'We can control nature.' We've thought that now for a hundred years, and nature is fighting back, and we are not going to win. And ultimately, that was the big idea that I felt like our silly, crazy movie could elucidate for people a little bit. Don't poke the bear.

And don't coke the bear.

[Silence.] Yeah. Maybe don't pollute the natural world with crazy substances. This is not going to go well for humans.

I was surprised to see some of these accomplished performers turning up in "the coked-up killer bear movie."

The movie is really character-driven. At the end of the day, the premise is crazy enough, so the characters are actually really grounded, and the humor comes from the characters. I didn't just want to make a gory movie. I'm an actor; as a filmmaker I need great roles for actors to be part of it. And that's what Jimmy Warden's script offered me as a filmmaker.

This cast, though. First of all, Margo Martindale.

She's been one of my favorite actresses for so long, and when I read the script,

PHOTOS BY PAT REDMOND / COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

SAY NO TO DRUGS, BEARS.

"THERE'S JUST SOMETHING VERY OLD-SCHOOL CINEMATIC ABOUT PRACTICAL EFFECTS. I LOVE WHEN WE CAN GET THINGS IN-CAMERA."

-ELIZABETH BANKS

SCOTT SEISS ISN'T GETTING BACK TO IKEA TODAY.

I felt there was no one else to play the park ranger. The story takes place in the South, and there's something so southern about Margo. But also, the best actors can get away with anything because whatever they do, it's always going to be grounded. And that's what I felt like this required.

This is the first film featuring Ray Liotta to be released after his passing, and it was a joy to see him show up in the trailer.

Hopefully what Ray signals to the audience is that there's more to this movie than just a rampaging bear. I think that's what Ray saw. He was very flattered that I offered him the role. We had an amazing conversation about what I wanted to do in the film and what I wanted him to look like. I described this great wig and these glasses, and he was like, 'I'm on board.' I think he felt this was something really different for him, and that he would be in good hands with me. And I know that that bore out by the end.

And at the other end of the spectrum you've got comedian Scott Seiss, who blew up online in 2021 with his angry IKEA/retail employee monologues on TikTok.

That's where I saw him. There was something to him, just as a performer, that we thought was hilarious, and we sought him out. His audition was fantastic, and he's great in the movie. He's so expressive with those big eyes of his, and he does so much, but he's also an everyman. All these characters had to feel like they just felt settled into this environment and into this film. Scott was one of those people that we felt just sat in the movie in the right way.

Casting is a visual thing as much as anything. When you're putting together a movie that's scary, you're thinking about people's faces seeing scary things. You want those big, wide eyes. Scott is quick-witted, but it doesn't matter how quick your wit is – it takes your brain way too long to catch up to the fact that this bear's high on coke, right?

One assumes. As a horror magazine, studios approach us, wanting coverage, and then they give us six pictures of vaguely concerned people looking off-screen. So we need to thank you for these images, because you clearly know what party you're at. Are you a gore fan?

I love prep. And to me, all of that FX prep was just super fun, everything from the viscosity of the blood, the color of the blood, the amount of blood. That was multiple meetings and days. And all of the prosthetics went through multiple design processes and then applications and tests and all of that. So I love that part of it. As an actor, when it can be that real and it's not just like a green sock on your arm, it's so much better.

How did you find rolling in that space as a director?

There's just something very old-school cinematic about practical effects. I love when we can get things in-camera. And I tried to do that as much as I could here because, frankly, we had a CGI bear. There's a whole missing character in many of our setups. So everything else in the setup that could be real, I tried to make real.

I said to everyone, 'I have to believe it.' I have to know what the reference is. I have to know where this came from. 'How did this wound happen?' And we looked at a lot of gruesome bear situations. They're out there on the internet; I don't highly recommend it. But I didn't want fantasy. I wanted reality.

TOM (SCOTT SEISS) PLAYS THE HAND THAT FATE (AND A COKED-UP BEAR) DEALT HIM. (RIGHT) THE LATE, GREAT RAY LIOTTA IS LOADED FOR LOADED BEAR.

PHOTOS BY PAT REDMOND / COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

The FX team certainly heard that, from the looks of it.

I love giving people the ability to be creative in that way. There were people, by the way, who I was discussing the project with early on. And it was all on Zoom. So I was able to share my screen, pictures of real bear attacks, real gunshots, wounds, legs ripped off, things like that. And there were people who turned green and were just, 'Ohhhh.' And I'd say, 'Oh, this isn't the movie for you.'

I really loved the FX people who would say, 'yeah, yeah, that's a really good picture, but have you *seen* this picture?' And then showed me something even more vile. So that was how I found my collaborators. I was like, 'who really wants to go for it?' 💀

This conversation was edited for length and clarity.

TOM (SCOTT SEISS) AND BETH (KAHYUN KIM) DISCOVER THE WORLD'S LEAST EFFECTIVE DOORSTOP (LEO HANNA).

"IF YOU'RE EXCITED TO SEE A MOVIE CALLED COCAINE BEAR, I THINK YOU'LL BE DELIGHTED BY THIS MOVIE."

-ELIZABETH BANKS

DAVEED (O'SHEA JACKSON JR.) GIVES COCAINE BEAR THE FINGER. OR TWO. RIGHT: ELIZABETH BANKS, MAESTRO OF MAYHEM.

EMILY HAGINS IS NOT SORRY ABOUT SORRY ABOUT THE DEMON

BY RYAN SCOTT

THE DIRECTOR, WHO MADE HER FIRST FEATURE FILM AT THE AGE OF 12, IS PLAYING FOR KEEPS WITH HER NEW MOVIE.

Making movies is hard, especially if you're an adult with a head full of pesky, deterring knowledge of the real world. Emily Hagins didn't have that problem when she made her first movie, the ultra-low-budget zombie film *Pathogen*, at the young age of 12. The movie has since been preserved by the American Genre Film Archive (AGFA) and set Hagins on a career path that continues today, 18 years later, as the filmmaker's sixth feature, *Sorry About the Demon*, is headed to Shudder on January 22.

"Both my parents loved movies. So when I was a little kid, they wanted to show me movies," Hagins explains of the genesis of her passion. "My dad worked in a video store at one point in his life. I loved *The Muppet Movie*. It wasn't just things that were coming out at the time that I was a kid." Hagins also had the benefit of growing up largely in Austin, Texas, where there is a great local film scene, with the Alamo Drafthouse and Paramount Theatre serving as havens of sorts for the filmmaker in her youth. Luckily, many screenings around town also provided access to filmmakers, as they would often attend these showings.

"It was very informative to somebody who wanted to learn," Hagins says. "There just weren't a

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAPER STREET PICTURES

lot of summer camps at the time, especially not for kids that young. So I started to work on some independent films. I'd kind of show up and get to see the set. There was one production, I made some fake blood and guts for them, and I got to help out. This was all shaping me into thinking, well, the only way you can really really learn this is to do it. That's when I started to make the short films and get in my head, 'I should make a feature film.'"

Hagins, fortunately, had two things going for her: supportive parents and the sweet, blissful ignorance of youth. "I think it just came from not knowing what you can't do as a kid," Hagins says. "I don't have a lot of money, it's just my home video camera and my friends. What can we do?" What they did was create *Pathogen*, a movie that garnered lots of attention given that it was made by someone who hadn't even achieved teenagerhood yet.

While Hagins cut her teeth in horror, she spent some time in her budding career outside of it, focusing more on teen dramas like *Grow Up*, *Tony Phillips* and *Coin Heist*.

But she dipped her toes back into the genre pool with an episode of the *V/H/S* TV series, as well as the opening segment of horror anthology *Scare Package*. *Sorry About the Demon* represents her welcome return in feature form.

In no small part, it was *Scare Package* producer Aaron B. Koontz who helped bring Hagins back into the fold. Both of them were part of the Austin film scene and, though Koontz is older than Hagins, she beat him to the punch in actually having a career in film. "I looked up to Emily," Koontz says. Though he went to school for film, Koontz ended up working in the video game industry before he finally gave filmmaking an honest shot. As a producer, Koontz was gobsmacked to learn that Hagins was having trouble getting a movie financed.

"People should be lined up around the block to make whatever you want," he recalls thinking. "That kind of caught me off guard. I realized that so many people were happy for Emily, but they still looked at her as a teenage director. They still wanted to put her in this box. But she's not, she's a veteran director who holds her own in every way. I reached a point where I was trying to get movies made and was having some success as a producer. I was like, 'Look, I know people, I know ways to do this. I'll get your movie made.'"

So, what is *Sorry About the Demon*, exactly? "A breakup horror/comedy about a guy that was just dumped and he ends up moving into a haunted house," Hagins explains. "The ghosts don't really want him there, but he's too sad and lonely to leave. They have to figure out how to coexist in the house together." Horror comedies are notoriously tough to pull off, as either genre on its own can buckle under the weight of coming up short. Blending them together? When it actually works, it's magic.

"There's a lot to be said about how both genres will play with the same structure of a setup and a punchline. The thing that's really difficult about blending them is that people can have a wildly different sense of what's scary versus what's funny. Somebody might hate a fart joke, but love a jumpscare," Hagins says. "I think the best thing you can do when blending those genres is to just have characters who are people going through something. They're learning a life lesson. However the comedy naturally arises out of those situations and their awareness, or lack of awareness, should be where the comedy is coming from."

Not only is it difficult to pull off the balancing act of comedy meshing with horror, but the production itself presented its own unique challenges – namely filming in the heart of a global pandemic. The crew turned a Holiday Inn into their studio and lodging to safely make the movie happen. "We

JAKE (JUDE ZAPPALA) GETS GREEN; AMY (PAIGE EVANS) PAINTS IT BLACK.

MAKEUP ARTISTS NICOLE RODRIGUEZ AND RENÉE EMMA TAG-TEAM ON TRANSFORMING GRACE (PRESLEY ALLARD).

shot it in a hotel in Canada, where they also shot *V/H/S/94*," Hagins reveals. "The whole set was built in the atrium of a Holiday Inn, and we stayed in that Holiday Inn. All the rooms of the house, and all the locations in the movie, they're all these corners of this hotel. You just turn a corner and suddenly you're back in a Holiday Inn. It was a very interesting experience."

Despite the challenges, Hagins handled the whole thing like a seasoned pro. "Emily always was able to keep her cool, and she was definitely dealt some curveballs. We had some crew that had to be replaced. We've had some trying situations, but Emily knew what she wanted, and was extremely prepared," Koontz says. "She has a notebook that's like two dictionaries thick. It's everything in the movie, and she's carrying it around all the time," Koontz reveals. "I think good directors have that. Good directors know what shade of green the shirt needs to be, because that shade of green is important to that character, and important to the tone and the mood of the film. Emily has those answers all the time."

Koontz also spoke to her calm demeanor, which made for a very great environment on set. But that doesn't mean that Hagins isn't willing to put her foot down when she feels it's important to do so. "There were times where I was like, 'Hey, we need to move on." And she's like, 'No, I'm gonna get more.' She stuck to her guns. I think that's what a great director has to do. And Emily did that in spades."

"What I love about filmmaking, in particular, is how collaborative it is. It's a better movie when everyone has put their unique stamp on it together," Hagins says. "Every production is different. Maybe that's part of how it's stayed interesting and innovative every time I'm making a movie, because it's never the same. And hopefully it's gotten a little bit better since those early days."

While Hagins is incredibly humble about her career and remarkable journey as a filmmaker, she recently looked back on *Pathogen* when AGFA released it on Blu-ray, taking some lessons from her younger self. "I noticed some things when I was a little bit more carefree that I wanted to incorporate, now that it's become more of a career," Hagins explains. "There were some things that I did naturally at that age with that movie that I had to relearn [as an adult]."

But those who work with her say it has decidedly gotten better over the years. "Emily can speak and write dialogue in a way that I can't. She has this interesting sensibility where she understands genre through and through, she knows movies left and right," Koontz says. "There is no one who writes horror better than Emily Hagins." When it comes to that writing, Hagins does have her self-imposed limitations and rules. "I can have characters my age or younger - I can't go older than me when I'm writing. So that the experience stays true to where I am, at whatever stage of life I'm at."

Hagins did take a break from horror for several years, but it doesn't necessarily sound like that's something she wants to do again, as this is a space she likes to exist in. "It's just such a wonderful space to work in, and a wonderful community. I think that's just what I want to be part of," Hagins says. The filmmaker admits that "it would be nice to have a little bit more money. A little bit of a bigger budget for a good original horror movie, I would absolutely do," Hagins says. "But I do think it's very different from these small, intimate productions with a small, dedicated team that's working really hard for a short period of time."

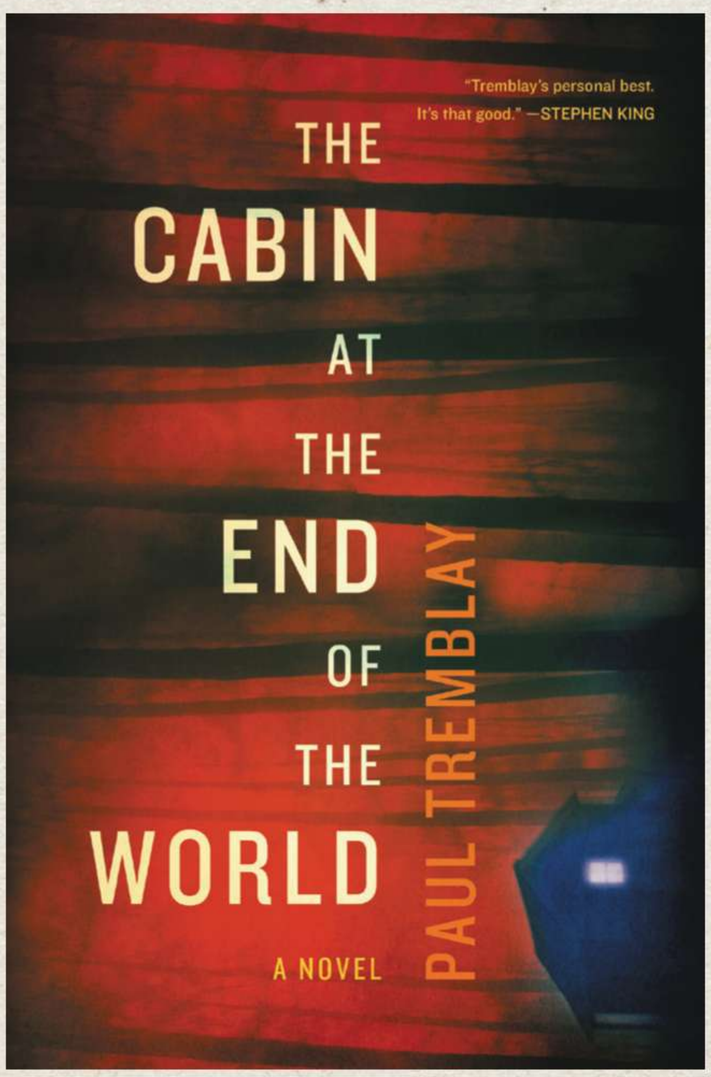
For now, Hagins is happy to be bringing her latest effort to Shudder, and hopes she can do what other filmmakers did for her when she was but a young, aspiring director. "I was looking towards other directors that were older than me that have more experience or advice, and I want to always help younger filmmakers as well if I can." 💀

SCOUT FLINT (GHOST BOY), DAVE PENIUK (KEN), SARAH CLEVELAND (TAMMY), PRESLEY ALLARD (GRACE), AND JUDE ZAPPALA (JAKE), HAVIN' SOME FUN WITH AN OVEN.

By Paul Tremblay

MY VISIT TO THE CABIN

The author of the terrifying book behind M. Night Shyamalan's KNOCK AT THE CABIN gives a peek into his diary from his days on set.



THE AUTHOR TRAVELED TO RURAL PENNSYLVANIA LAST YEAR TO SEE HIS NOVEL BROUGHT TO LIFE.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

MAY 11, 2021

Dear Diary,

I'm heading to the movie set of the *The Cabin at the End of the World* (what a great title, right?) adaptation, and I can't tell anyone about it yet. But I can't lie to you, diary. The movie is called *Knock at the Cabin* and is being directed by M. Night Shyamalan. I have a sixth sense that when I split the village for the unbreakable airport that, um, I'll follow signs for my glass encased terminal. Yeah.

Dear, D,

Whoa, the studio bought me a first-class plane ticket. No stuffing my 6'4 frame into the cattle car seats, no person in front of me reclining hard into my knees. This is decadent. The flight attendants bring me breakfast! They give me a moist hand towel! How can I ever go back to regular air travel? I take a plane selfie for my Insta, but I'm a good boy and do not mention my destination or the reason for the trip.

Dear, Di Airy,

Philly, I am in you. I'm a fan of your cream cheese but hate your sports teams. I keep those secrets and more as I navigate the rental car to the swanky hotel. My room is larger than my first apartment. All that extra space leaves rooms for ghosts so I'll have to sleep with the light on. But no time for ghosts if I want to make it to the set.

After a thirty-minute battle through traffic, I arrive at *place redacted*. Security foolishly allows my entrance and I meet with producer Steven Schneider in front of a large office/warehouse building. There's a huge white tent next to the warehouse, which is where, I assume, a homey cabin is housed. Wrong. Steven ushers me inside the building, past offices and walls of character photos and wardrobe racks, and into the cavernous warehouse, which is where they're hiding the cabin. The exterior hasn't been painted/finished and Steven explains this cabin is used for the interior shots only; they can better control the light-

ing as opposed to being on location. There's another cabin built in the woods for the exterior shots. (I plan on squatting there later.) Movie magic!

Without fanfare or warning, we weave past the banks of lights that flash burn my delicate skin, and we step through the cabin's front door without knocking, which doesn't seem to be in the spirit of things. And holy shit, it's beautiful inside: craftsman-built, darkly stained wooden floors and walls, built-in bookcases, and… oh yeah, hi everyone!

I shake hands with Dave Bautista (and I don't dare squeeze his hand), and Jonathan Groff and Ben Aldridge are fake-tied to chairs, and I shake hands with Night, and I'm whisked away to a quaint bedroom in which there is a monitor to watch the proceedings. The hamster wheel of my brain rodents is a blur of revolutions.

ROOM WITH A VIEW: THE AUTHOR'S VANTAGE POINT, AS THE STRANGERS (ABBY QUINN, NIKKI AMUKA-BIRD, DAVE BAUTISTA, AND RUPERT GRINT, ABOVE) TIE UP THE FAMILY (BEN ALDRIGE, KRISTEN CUI, AND JONATHAN GROFF, BELOW).

Dear Notebook in which I Write Things,

As scenes are filmed, I'm in the same room with Night, his assistant, the director of photography Jarin Blaschke, and the script supervisor Robb Foglia. Everyone is friendly and answers my questions between takes. To my observation, Robb secretly runs the movie given all his responsibilities. I'm currently writing a novel called *Horror Movie: a novel*, and the set experience/information I gather is invaluable.

Seeing scenes from my book playing out in front of me while, you know, sitting in the *cabin*, is a wild, unmooring experience. It isn't, as Stephen King once described, seeing what was inside my head playing out before me. I lived with that book for almost eighteen months during its writing and editing, and those characters and story images are fixed in my mind. It is instead like seeing a new version of the same or a similar story. It sounds trite but I am fascinated by the process. Also, it's weird sitting next to a bedroom window, sticking my arm out of it, and having my brain fooled into thinking my arm is dangling in the fresh outdoors air and not the inside of a Philly warehouse.

I'm invited to lunch with Night and the editor and other folks to eat and watch some dailies. I get to see the intense lead-up to the first onscreen death and I'm inordinately excited by the violence to come. I'm a terrible person.

Shooting wraps around 8pm and I drive back to my hotel and eat dinner outside to keep the hotel ghosts away for a little longer.

MAY 12, 2021

Dear Diary,

On day two, I go on a set walkabout. I find the prop area and a prop person. And dammit I forget his name because when I'm nervous (which is all the time) I forget names, but he was incredibly nice and proudly showed off the weapons. In the list of coolest things about the set visit, seeing the props is up there. Yes, I'm a horrible person. Maybe if I ask nicely, they'll let me keep one. I'm sure I can bring it back on the plane since I'll be in first class. Those people can do anything. I took some pictures. No one told me (in writing) that I couldn't.

"SEEING SCENES FROM MY BOOK PLAYING OUT IN FRONT OF ME WHILE, YOU KNOW, SITTING IN THE CABIN, IS A WILD, UNMOORING EXPERIENCE."

Between scenes, actors Ben Aldridge, Nikki Amuka-Bird, Jonathan Groff, and Abby Quinn relax in the cabin's backyard section of the warehouse. Sort of a patio, but not really. Anyway, I spend much of this day hanging out and badgering them with questions and chitchat. They are all so friendly and gracious; I can't speak highly enough of their generosity. And from what I've witnessed movie-wise, they do an amazing job of performing and translating the emotional core of the novel. We take a group photo with my book, and my arms don't know what to do other than be awkward.

Another mid-afternoon lunch with dailies. This time I get to see violence. Yes, I know, I'm terrible. It's a fabulously intense and disturbing scene.

Before I know it, it's the end of my last day on set. The cast and Night sign a copy of my book as a keepsake. They all have another early morning tomorrow so no one wants to go out drinking like a ~~rock star~~ writer with the writer. Alas. I head back to the hotel with a full head and heart.

A TOURIST IN A WORLD HE CREATED: THE AUTHOR WITH CAST AND CREW OF *KNOCK AT THE CABIN*.

MAY 20, 2021

Dear Diary,

I'm still buzzing from the excitement of the set visit and lamenting that I'm back teaching geometry.

Today, I am sent a link to read the movie's screenplay in its entirety. Once I click the link, I have four hours to read it. I click and read. Like most adaptations, there are differences between the book and the movie. I guess we'll see how—

Dammit, I shouldn't have made that extra cup of tea and pet my dog and looked at online ads for more horror t-shirts I don't need because somewhere in the third act I ran out of time and the screenplay link and my laptop self-destructed. I'll have to wait until February to find out if they will play Future of the Left's "The Hope That House Built" as the final credits roll. 💀

THINGS GET A L'IL CULTY IN THE *CABIN*.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES / BTS PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAUL TREMBLAY

By Meredith Borders

MAYHEM IN MINIATURE

A HISTORY OF DOLLHOUSE HORROR

Since their invention in the 17th century, dollhouses have been admired for their charming representation of life in 1:12 scale. But where there's life, there's death, and even a tiny house can be haunted.

"There are horizons through the brickwork, you wait and see."
– Jesse Burton, *The Miniaturist*

In 1686, a Dutch woman named Petronella Oortman commissioned the construction of an elaborate dollhouse. The cabinet of curiosities exactly mimicked her magnificent home, and Oortman dedicated her days to curating exquisite furnishings for the structure from some of the most exclusive artisans in Europe. Oortman's dollhouse is a stunning example of the replica homes that were becoming the rage among wealthy 17th century women, and it still sits in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam today.

Though little is known about Oortman's private life, over three hundred years later, author Jesse Burton wrote *The Miniaturist*, a haunting fiction about Oortman's dollhouse in which things go bump in the night, dark family secrets are uncovered, and Nella's miniatures portend her future. This has been the way of dollhouses since nearly their introduction to society: built for play or ornamentation, these small-scale

PETRONELLA OORTMAN'S CABINET HOME IS ONE OF THE FIRST AND FINEST OF ITS KIND.

reflections of common life bewitch the imagination and inspire dark fantasies. After all, horror's favorite trick is to take the mundane and make it terrifying.

"[A dollhouse is] a world that's contained and familiar, or an idealized version of the familiar," says genre miniaturist Melissa Kay. "It's usually a world that we wish existed, one that haunted our dreams, one that we only know in broken memories – and that's fascinating. And addicting."

The demographics of dollhouse addicts have shifted over the years. At first targeted to monied wives, the dollhouse later became a teaching product for children. Nuremberg kitchens, named after Germany's "toy city," became popular in the 1800s, but despite their eponym the miniaturized domestic tableaus were never intended as toys, instead teaching young girls about the ins and outs of running a household. It wasn't until the early 20th century that the dollhouse

THIS PAGE AND FACING: FRANCES GLESSNER LEE TOOK AN HEIRESS' HOBBY AND TURNED IT INTO THE BIRTH OF MODERN FORENSICS.

PHOTO (BOTTOM LEFT & TOP RIGHT) BY LORIE SHAULL

became commonly considered – and marketed as – a plaything. Meanwhile, the adult pursuit of miniatures as a hobby and artform has cycled back in fashion since the 1950s.

Toy, tool or trend, to a child a dollhouse is a governable universe, a safe place to mirror the domestic routines and pitfalls they see happening around them every day. In the child's house, the dad doll never gets mad and the mom doll doesn't drink too much. Nobody fights, cries or leaves without the child's permission. "Children use dolls and dollhouses to make sense of what's happened to them," says family therapist Mike Snoonian. "They might not have the expressive language skills yet to hold a back-and-forth conversation about their trauma," and that's where dollhouses can be useful to the therapeutic process. "Essentially the dolls offer this vivid and fascinating portrait of what is going on inside the child's brain."

Was it this use of a so-called toy to help children work through their fears that made the dollhouse a popular subject of horror stories – or did something more macabre pave the way?

In 1944, Frances Glessner Lee, an heiress with a passion for miniaturism and forensic science, began creating a series of nineteen intricate dioramas that she later endowed to Harvard Medical School's Department of Legal Medicine. These "Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death" are painstakingly rendered 1:12 models of composited crime scenes that Lee researched and recreated in the hopes of learning something new within their tiny, blood-spattered walls. In her quest for accuracy, Lee was a frequent visitor to the morgue and to autopsies, and the dioramas are so detailed, realistic and deliberately constructed that they have become an invaluable asset in educating students in the science of investigation. Each miniature crime scene is intended to be, as Lee said in *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, "an exercise in observing, interpreting, evaluating and reporting – there is no solution to be determined." In other words, Lee used miniatures to teach future investigators the art of keeping their eyes – and minds – open, to observe seemingly insignificant details without the bias of an assumed solution or suspect, to "convict the guilty, clear the innocent, and find the truth in a nutshell." When not on loan to museums like the Smithsonian, the Nutshell Studies are still used in forensic seminars today, and Lee is now known as the "mother of forensic science."

While the Nutshell Studies were one of the first examples of murder recreated in miniature, an unlikely source brought the idea to popular culture: Betty Ren Wright's 1983 children's book, *The Dollhouse Murders*. Troubled twelve-year-old Amy moves in with her Aunt Clare and soon finds a dollhouse in the attic, a precise miniature of the home where Clare lives, and where Amy's grandparents were murdered decades before. Every night, the dolls in the dollhouse reconstruct the gruesome crime, and it's up to Amy to figure out what they're trying to tell her. The book is formational horror for many fans of the genre, and a harbinger of the dollhouse horror scene that's grown in scale ever since.

BETTY REN WRIGHT'S YA SPOOKFEST OPENED THE DOOR FOR BUDDING DOLLHOUSE AFICIONADOS AND HORROR FANS ALIKE.

Stories about young people making sense of generational trauma can enrich your basic scare with emotional complexity. Add to that the uncanny geometry and potential microphobia inherent in a miniature world? "That's cinematic, baby," says Kay. "It's never a good sign when a dollhouse shows up in a movie – you know immediately that someone is hiding something. Because that's another thing: dollhouses are worlds where you can hide things in plain sight."

Plus, movies and television make practical sense as a platform for miniature storytelling, since filmmakers often use models to prep for scenes, plan out staging in three dimensions, and even as the basis for special effects that make their way into the final product. Abridged versions of life-sized settings create a fascinating visual dichotomy that can trick the viewers, who never know if they're looking at the house or the dollhouse. It's a technique used over and over, always to uneasy effect. In the opening moments of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*, we think we're once again at 1428 Elm Street, only to discover it's a popsicle stick model made by a tormented teen using crafts to work through her nightmares. In Kubrick's *The Shining*, we move seamlessly between the Overlook's hedge maze to a model in the lobby; in Garris' *The Shining*, it's a snow-capped miniature of the hotel itself that deceives our eyes. In *Beetlejuice*, Tim Burton makes cunning use of Adam Maitland's model of Winter River, Connecticut, and it was only a matter of time (eight films, to be exact) before the *Amityville* franchise moved into *Dollhouse* territory.

John Harrison's "The House of the Head," a segment in the first episode of Shudder's *Creepshow*, makes hay of both the emotional and visual opportunities offered in a dollhouse horror. In the script, written by Josh Malerman, young Evie (Cailey Fleming) discovers that the dolls living in her dollhouse are being haunted by a hideous, disembodied head. At first, Evie's play seems like an example of healthy creativity. As the owner of the local dollhouse store says, "They still haven't come up with a better way for a child to figure out who they really are… They don't typically like to tell you about it either, what they're figuring out."

Harrison points out that Evie's story isn't even necessarily one of trauma, other than simply the trauma of being a child and not understanding anything about the adult world around her. "There is always that thing that's around all of us that we know is a power beyond us, that we can't completely control, that inserts itself into our lives. You can call it fate, you can call it a malevolence, you can call it whatever you want to call it. We always fear this great power that has control over our lives, that we're never fully in command. And *that's* the head."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMC

Having sorted out the thematic underpinnings of Malerman's story, the next problem to tackle was, of course, "well, how do I shoot it?" A horror anthology veteran, Harrison immediately sussed out the practical issues involved in shooting in such a tiny space, and the budget didn't allow for building an oversized dollhouse, "which is what you would normally do." Fortunately, "the *Creepshow* gods" were feeling generous that day, and prop master Lucas Godfrey found the perfect dollhouse at a store outside of Atlanta.

"It was wonderful because it had multiple levels. It had a front and back which opened up so that you could actually get inside, and lots of windows so you could look inside, and [Evie] could look in from the outside." And after cinematographer Rob Draper procured a snorkel lens, it became a cinch to bring the audience right inside the dollhouse. "So once I came up with those two things, that it's actually her imagining her own life and working it out through what's going on in the dollhouse, and then being able to visualize that, then the story kind of came together."

We're in the middle of something of a dollhouse horror moment, with "The House of the Head" joining *The Lodge*, *Sharp Objects*, *Locke & Key*, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* and others in a recent trend that starts

IN *CREEPSHOW*'S "THE HOUSE OF THE HEAD," EVIE (CAILEY FLEMING) DISCOVERS THAT HER DOLLS ARE BEING HAUNTED BY A MENACING NOGGIN.

PHOTO BY EIKE SCHROTER/ COURTESY OF NETFLIX

THANKS TO THE TINY SHENANIGANS PLAYING OUT IN HER DOLLHOUSE, FLORA (AMELIE SMITH) IS THE FIRST TO NOTICE SOMETHING'S AMISS IN *BLY MANOR*.

Visually, narratively, therapeutically – dollhouses are a deep, dark well that horror storytellers have been drawing from for ages.

AMITYVILLE DOLLHOUSE – IT WRITES ITSELF, NO?

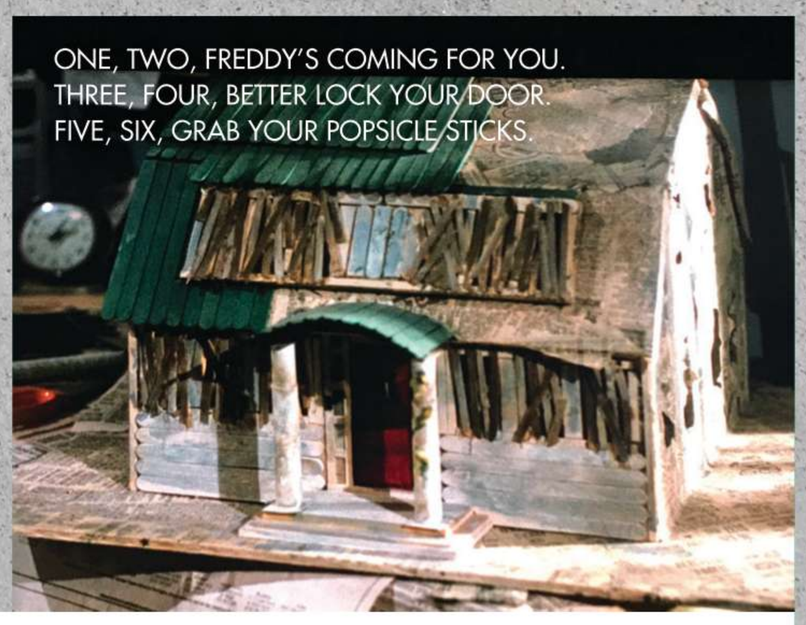
with, almost certainly, Ari Aster's 2018 psycho-shocker *Hereditary*. In the film, Toni Collette plays Annie, a miniature artist who is still working through the painful secrets belonging to her mother when her own, immediate family undergoes reality-shattering tragedy. In between scenes of death, violence and rage, Annie crafts minuscule worlds that she can rigidly control. The camera moves in and out of these microscopic scenes into Annie's real life with deceptive fluidity, and then suddenly we were all seeing scary dollhouses on screens everywhere.

"I think the fact that we're living in an age where we're constantly creating small worlds and 'personas' for ourselves – in games, in social media, in remote work communication media – contributes to the fascination with [dollhouses] right now," Kay suggests. "We're obsessed with creating our own worlds, and individualism, and a dollhouse is a literal representation of that."

Filmmaker Mike Flanagan uses dollhouses in two of his recent horror adaptations, *The Haunting of Bly Manor* and *The Haunting of Hill House*. Of the two, *Bly Manor* makes a centerpiece of the device, with Flora's (Amelie Bea Smith) dolls seemingly moving by themselves throughout their own tiny Bly Manor, representing the location of the haunted home's undead residents. But as with everything in Flanagan's storytelling, there's something deeper happening beneath the dread. "I think for kids, it's about control," Flanagan said in a 2020 *Vanity Fair* interview. "Kids have such little agency. Dolls provide that." Snoonian concurs: "It's rare for a child to have a lot of autonomy. Their days are scheduled. Their food is picked out for them. Their clothes are picked out for them. They're told when they must go to bed, when they must eat, when they must use the bathroom." Dolls often represent children's first attempts at independence, Snoonian says. "When they're playing with the dolls or using the dollhouse, they get to be in charge. They get to be the ones that make the decisions."

It's a theme that Flanagan explored once before *Bly Manor*. In the director's loose adaptation of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, child psychologist Theo (Kate Siegel) brings out a dollhouse to help her young client process the abuse she's been suffering

GENIUS, MADNESS, AN OBSESSION WITH MINIATURES: ANY OF THESE TRAITS COULD BE *HEREDITARY*.



ONE, TWO, FREDDY'S COMING FOR YOU.
THREE, FOUR, BETTER LOCK YOUR DOOR.
FIVE, SIX, GRAB YOUR POPSICLE STICKS.

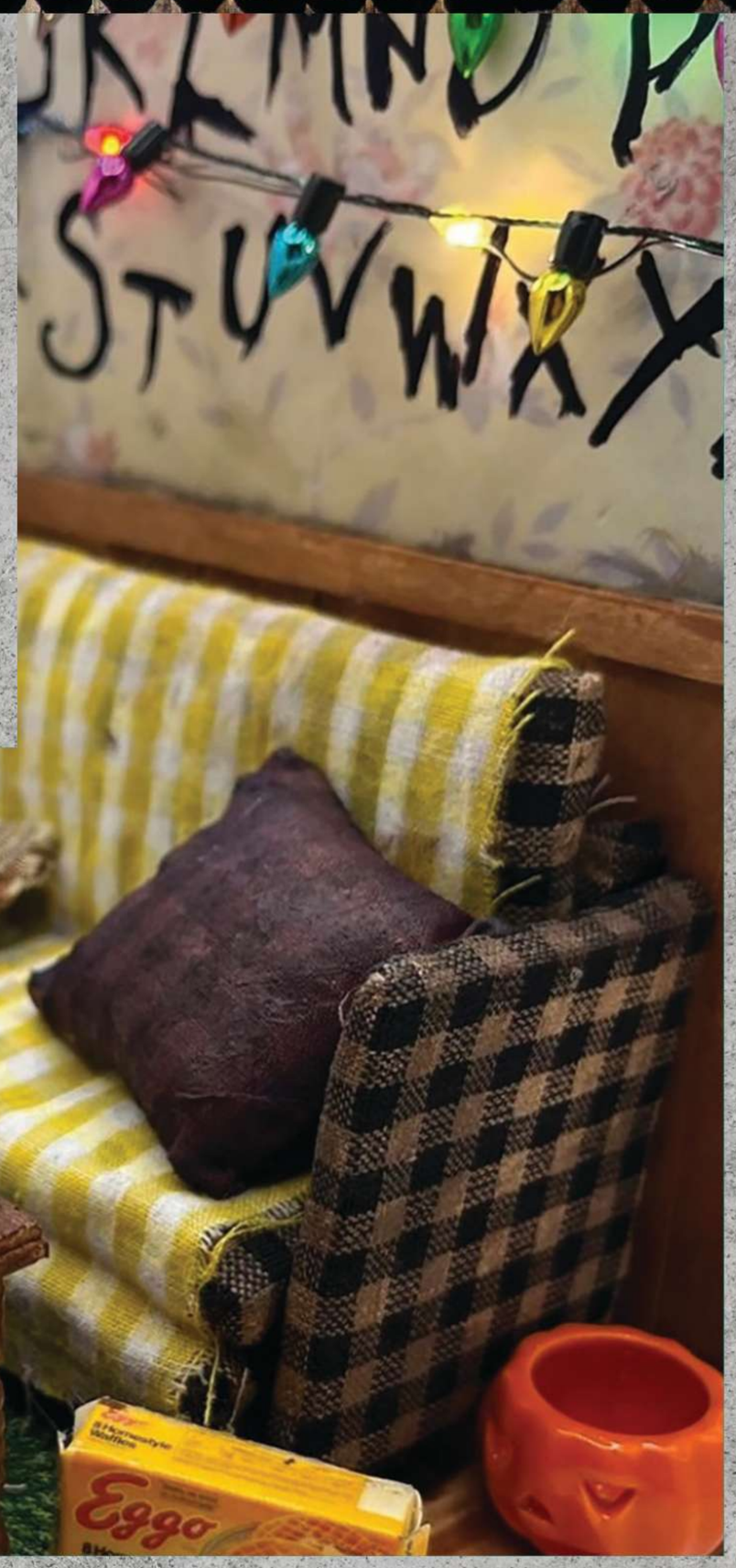
in her foster home. Meanwhile, Theo's sister Shirley (Elizabeth Reaser) has built a model from their late mother's blueprints of their never-realized "forever home," dealing with her own complicated grief stemming from that loss. Shirley is using the model to control in miniature what she cannot control in life; Theo uses the dollhouse as a tool, keeping her own pain at a distance by helping the children in her care wrestle with theirs.

"It can be heartbreaking to watch kids play with their dolls, because I'm often seeing them recreate the situations they've been through," Snoonian says. "It's almost like there's this compulsion to transfer the hurt and pain that they've experienced onto something else, [because] they know that object, that doll, cannot hurt someone else afterwards."

Visually, narratively, therapeutically – dollhouses are a deep, dark well that horror storytellers have been drawing from for ages. But does any of that explain why, exactly, they're so damn creepy?

"I think it's probably a holdover from our childhood," Harrison says. "When we're young and we use imagination and fantasy to work out our lives, we invest inanimate objects with all kinds of power. I don't think we ever really give that up."

As a creator of spooky dollhouses, Kay has another theory. "Well, it's kind of like placing a bit of your soul into a world of your making," she muses. "It's a world shaped specifically by one person, based on their personal experiences and observations. Some of us are inherently haunted, or dreamy, and these worlds are shaped by those personas. They'll have this eerie vibe because it's essentially a world created by a biased human god, and we're not infallible." 💀



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MELISSA KAY

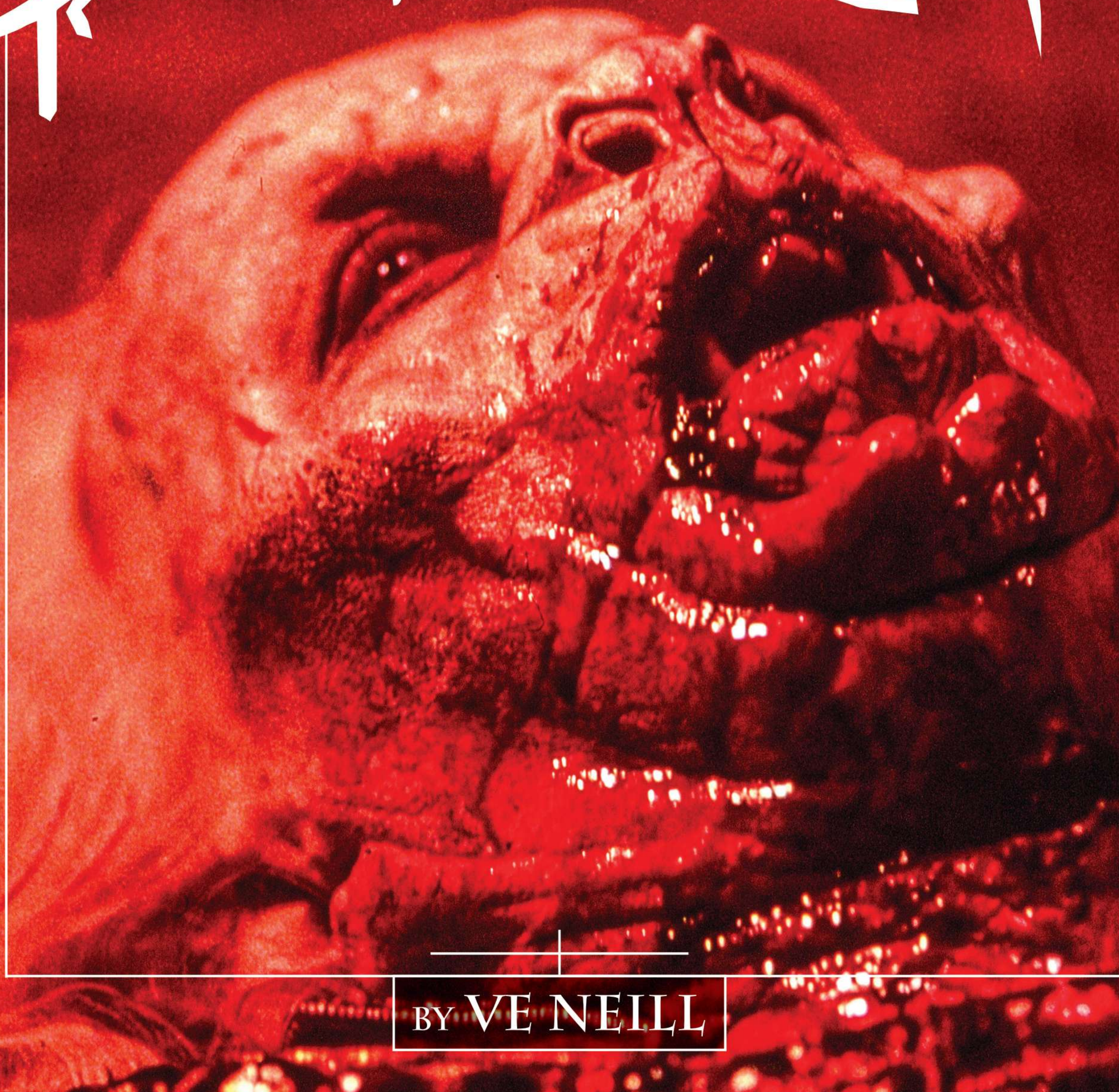
Follow Melissa Kay's work on Instagram and TikTok @mechaminis. Check out Mike Snoonian's podcasts Psychoanalysis: A Horror Therapy Podcast *and* The Pod and the Pendulum *on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. Keep up with all seasons of* Creepshow *on Shudder.*

THIS PAGE: GENRE MINIATURIST MELISSA KAY'S CREATIONS PUT THE "TINY" IN "TERRIFYING."

THE MAKEUP MAGICIAN BEHIND *BLADE*, *VICE*, *WATCHMEN* AND SO MUCH MORE REVEALS HIS BLOODSUCKING SECRETS TO THE LEGENDS MAKEUP ACADEMY CO-FOUNDER.

GREG CANNOM ON BRAM STOKER'S

Dracula



BY VE NEILL

FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA DIRECTED *DRACULA* – HOW WAS IT WORKING WITH HIM?

It was an easy film to design for. Coppola was so great to work with. He would have these meetings where he would play music and have all sorts of beautiful Gothic artwork placed around the room. He would tell stories about what he wanted to do. It was so easy to design for him because he painted such a wonderful picture for us. The meetings really brought his overall vision to life. It was a very creative environment to work in.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE FILM?

I was originally hired to do the old age makeups, but things just kept getting bigger. As the filming progressed things kept coming up, like when they break into Mina's bedroom and Dracula is there in bed with her. They wanted to have this big sword fight, but he was naked. So what do you do? Then Gary [Oldman] came to me and said, 'What if the window is open and they think I've left, but I'm actually on the ceiling and I drop down with all this skin hanging?' And I said, 'Ok, why don't you talk to Coppola about it. I'll do a design and show him something in a couple of days.' It was then that myself and Glen Hanz sculpted a two-foot-tall miniature [maquette] of the bat creature design and showed it to Coppola, at which point he said, 'I have to have that!' It was very difficult because the set we were going to shoot it on was also being torn down for a different scene. That caused a huge time crunch and, as a result, we only had four weeks to build it.

The first week we took casts of Gary and had to guess about certain parts of the build because we had to reverse engineer some of it. The next three weeks were spent building the suit and sculpting the makeup. Linda Notaro built the Spandex suit and dyed it to look like skin. Stuart Artingstall ventilated the entire Spandex hair suit that fit over a muscle foam latex suit that Glen Hanz sculpted. Then Glen and I sculpted the head which consisted of a cowl piece that wrapped around, and then a single full-face foam prosthetic piece was glued onto that. We had to keep it simple due to our time restraints. The whole build was insane. I remember that we finished it at 4am on a Sunday night. The whole film was like that.

Then there was the scene where [Dracula] arrives in England on the boat and gets off the boat as a wolf. Eiko Ishioka, the costume designer, had made this magnificent rubber costume with this massive billowing cape for him to wear as he arrives walking around London and I said, 'Well, where did that come from? He got off the ship as a wolf. Why don't we make a really cool, sexy wolf creature makeup and suit for him?' This is the makeup and suit you see him wearing when he seduces Lucy in the graveyard. I designed three faces for it and Coppola let me choose the one I liked the most. The test we did with one of them was too *Planet of the Apes*-like so we went with the last one I sculpted. We made an entirely new hair suit for that look, as well. I was so surprised when I saw the dailies of how cool it looked. The scene was very sexy and sensual.

HOW MANY STAGES OF MAKEUP WERE THERE?

There were four different makeups that were used. The old age, the bat creature and the wolf creature. We were going to do the old age makeup at the end when he dies but I thought that would be boring, so we did a hybrid of the Bat Creature and the old age. That was actually my favorite makeup in the whole film.

There was also an old age makeup that I sculpted by looking at my books of older Native Americans because their faces are so expressive, and I wanted to use that look to make Gary look like he was 500 years old. The sculpture was fabulous, but it didn't look anything like Gary. So, I got Gary's lifecast and started looking at it closely with a flashlight at different angles so

THIS PAGE AND FACING: THE VARIOUS FORMS OF COUNT DRACULA (GARY OLDMAN).

I could see the subtle lines in his face where he would actually start to age. You know, like where the jowls are and the eye bags. Even young people have lines that you can follow. I took a pencil and drew it all in directly on his facecast and really tried to make it look like him, even though I added the wolf-like ears coming down his face. This is when I really started to learn how to do age makeups by actually using the person's facecast. I also use facecasts of old people because photos just don't really show the three-dimensional quality. This is where a lot of people make mistakes when they're sculpting old age makeups. You can't sculpt them outwards. They need to be sculpted forward so you can create that sunken look. In the end Mitch Devane and I sculpted the old age makeup together.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO DO THE BIG, FULL BODY MAKEUPS?

Well, I always try to think about the actors when I'm designing makeups. Gary loves wearing makeups but even still. The Bat and Wolf Creature took about two to two-and-a-half hours to put on because it was a relatively simple makeup to do. The bat creature was really hard for Gary because his nose was smashed into his face so he couldn't breathe though his nose and he had these massive teeth that pushed his mouth out, plus huge contact lenses.

The suits zipped up the back and I had made a piece of foam [attached] to the head to the suit with a hair piece. I don't know if you remember but when we did those suits on *Cocoon*, I had this adhesive that would dissolve quickly with acetone so we could get the girls out of the alien suits quickly. Well, that's what I used for Gary's neck piece as well. So it took about 10 minutes to get him in and about the same to get him out. He was completely covered so it was important to make it as easy as possible to remove. It was really uncomfortable for him. We did the Wolf Creature the same way.

What's funny is, I really had no idea what I was doing back then. Luckily, I had worked with Rick Baker on *Greystoke*. That's where I learned about the suits and knew to get Stuart to do the hair work. It was so much fun. You had no time to worry about anything, you just had to get things done.

DID YOU WORK WITH EIKO ISHIOKA AT ALL?

Oh yeah, Coppola put her in charge of me and she said, 'I don't know anything about what you do. You just do it.' We had a great working relationship. I remember the day we had just put Gary all together in the old age [makeup], wig and costume and everybody, including Coppola, [was] very excited about it all. We were rushing through the stage and I ran into Eiko and shook hands and said, 'We did it!' She was really an incredible person. At one point when we went to do the death scene, Eiko said to me, 'You can't get blood on this costume, there's only one, and it costs $35,000.' I said, 'We have to, because he's getting staked.' I told her that I have a special blood that will come out of the costume. Well, she came up with this cool idea to make a panel for that area so it could be changed out. There was also this big Egyptian hood thing that was made for that costume that you don't really see. It was on the set but Gary never wears it. Eiko brought it to the makeup trailer for Gary to try it on. He put it on and said, 'I'm not wearing that. It looks ridiculous.' She said, 'But you have to,' and Gary said, 'It ain't gonna happen.' That was that.

WAS THERE AN OVERALL CONCEPT FOR THE DRACULA CHARACTER?

I wanted Gary to look like he was always moving. You know, transforming from one character look to another. We also made Gary an arm that he wore during the dinner scene that would extend a little bit. The fingers would elongate when he reached out. It looked really cool because he was already wearing finger extensions for part of his old age makeup. Speaking of wanting him to be moving all the time: Coppola did this thing where his shadow was always moving separately from him that was very effective, as well, to help with the illusion of constant movement.

WHO DESIGNED THE WIG?

Stuart Artingstall designed and made all the wigs and hair work for the film, except for the old age wig with the two buns.

DID YOU DO ALL THE BITE MARKS, AS WELL?

I did the bite wounds, as well. I applied all the major makeup application for the whole film. Michèle Burke did the application where he gets his throat slit when he's in the coffin because I was unavailable that day. Matthew Mungle assisted me putting on the makeups but mainly did his finger extensions and then he would watch Gary on the set. He also applied the makeup for the scene where he cries and his tears are diamonds. Mathew also applied the stunt double makeups for the film.

HOW DID YOU DO THE GROWING FANGS?

The growing teeth was a clever idea Rob Bottin had come up with on *The Howling*. It was a metal apparatus that could be pushed up with the tongue that would then cause the front of the wire to go down. I made these small foam teeth that were flat and glued them to the wire so when it went down it gave the effect that the teeth were

DRACULA'S HORRIFIC BAT FORM AS A WORK IN PROGRESS.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VE NEILL

pointing and growing. For this film, however, I did a version with hard teeth that grew with shifting gums. Thus, the illusion.

At one point Coppola said no fangs. A lot of the film was shot with no teeth but I said, 'It's a vampire movie, they have to have fangs,' so I made these small gum dentures for the girls to wear so you can see the teeth. Eventually Coppola said, 'It's a vampire movie, of course we need fangs.' *[laughs]*

WHO DID THE SCAR ON ANTHONY HOPKINS?

Anthony already has a scar there, so it was followed and collodion was used. Michèle Burke did Sir Anthony's makeup.

WHERE THERE ANY EFFECTS THAT YOU DESIGNED THAT DIDN'T COME TO FRUITION?

There was an effect that we wanted to do in the church where he was hanging from the ceiling in what appears to be a big blood drop encasing him. We wanted to fill it with blood and see it expand and then shoot it in reverse so it looked like it was sucking up into his body, but there just wasn't enough time to do it. We did, however, do a shot of him in the ship where he's lying in the coffin in what appears to be a membrane. Then he starts to turn into the wolf.

I also wanted to make a version of the bat arms for Gary to wear when he's climbing on the side of the castle in the old age makeup with that red robe on, but it never happened. We made several other makeups that wound up not being used. There was a really cool full body suit we built for Lucy to wear when she goes into the garden that had blacklight veins running through it, but she refused to wear it or even try it on. Oh well. We also did a makeup on Gary that was all veins, but we never used it. There was also a younger makeup of him turning into a wolf that didn't get used.

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF MICHAEL BALLHAUS' CINEMATOGRAPHY?

The film was so beautifully shot. I remember going to dailies and you could all the subtle nuances of the paint job. I had made this PAX paint so that you could see all the veins in his face through it and it showed up so well on film. However, when they did their final edit, they darkened the film and the mood of the film without compromising the makeup. When it came out of VHS you couldn't see any of the details. I was very disappointed to say the least. If you want to see the film how it was shot, get the 4K Blu-ray version that came out a couple of years ago. You can see everything really well. It's just beautiful.

SO, GREG, AS WE ALL KNOW YOU WERE AWARDED THE ACADEMY AWARD THAT YEAR FOR *DRACULA*. ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS TO SAY REGARDING THE OSCARS WAS THE FACT THAT BOTH YOU AND I WERE NOMINATED FOR TWO FILMS THAT YEAR AND ONE OF THEM WAS TOGETHER FOR THE FILM *HOFFA*. I ALWAYS GET A KICK OUT OF SAYING I WAS THE OTHER TWO LOSERS THAT YEAR. GOING IN, EVERYBODY HAD TO KNOW THAT THERE WAS NO WAY *DRACULA* WOULDN'T WIN. THERE WERE SO MANY OUTSTANDING MAKEUPS, AND SO WELL-EXECUTED – HOW COULD YOU NOT WIN?

Well, you know what's funny, Coppola was all about the costumes. He was a big Eiko fan and when the book came out, it was all about her. The costumes were indeed gorgeous, but I think the film would have been pretty boring without all the makeup effects. You know after the film came out Coppola said that Gary and I overproduced all the makeups but of course he was the one who said yes to everything and 'I have to have this.' I was having a chat with Dick Smith right after I started working on the film and Dick said, 'You know you're going to get fired off the film,' and I said 'Oh crap!' of course. I think Dick was a bit put off with the fact that he had just been fired off one of the *Godfather* films, I don't remember which. But of course, I didn't get fired. 💀

I had to remind Greg that this is the 30-year anniversary of the film. It would have been fun to recreate one of his amazing makeups for one of the shows that took place this past year. Maybe it doesn't matter. We should do it now anyway. I, for one, would love to see one of them in person. Thank you, Greg, for your many years of remarkable artistry. - Ve

This conversation was edited for length and clarity.

JUNJI ITO Artist, Icon, MANIAC

The manga auteur has two adaptations coming out this year on Adult Swim and Netflix. If you don't know Junji Ito yet, it's time to meet him.

Junji Ito is a master of the macabre. Manga fans celebrate his unique style, from his major works *Tomie* and *Uzumaki* to his celebrated viral comics like "The Enigma of Amigara Fault," featured at the end of his two-part series *Gyo*. He's won numerous Eisner Awards, the comic book industry's equivalent of the Oscars, and over the decades has established himself as one of the greatest horror manga artists of all time. Ito's work has a powerful way of infiltrating the mind, lingering long after his stories are read – the telltale sign of a timeless horror auteur.

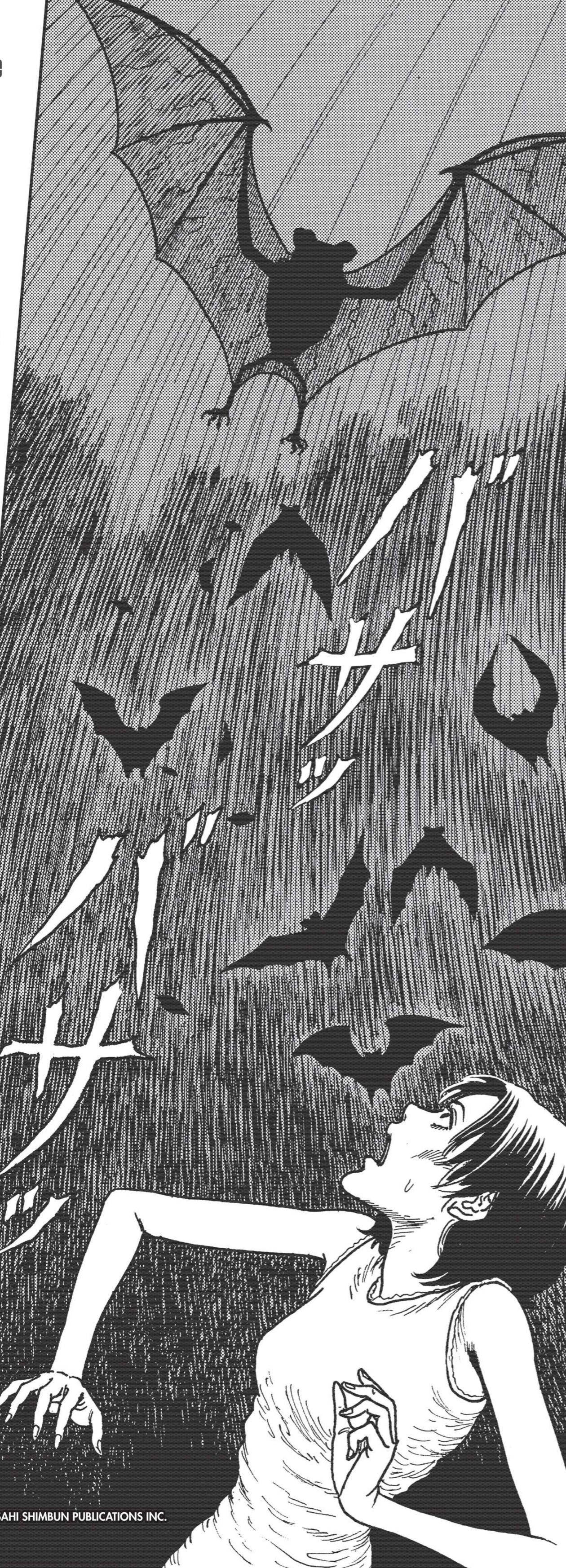
This year, fans new and old will get the chance to see Ito's work adapted for the small screen. On the horizon is the highly anticipated adaptation of *Uzumaki* from Adult Swim, as well as the Netflix anthology series *Junji Ito Maniac: Japanese Tales of the Macabre*, which will showcase stories from his *Smashed* collection.

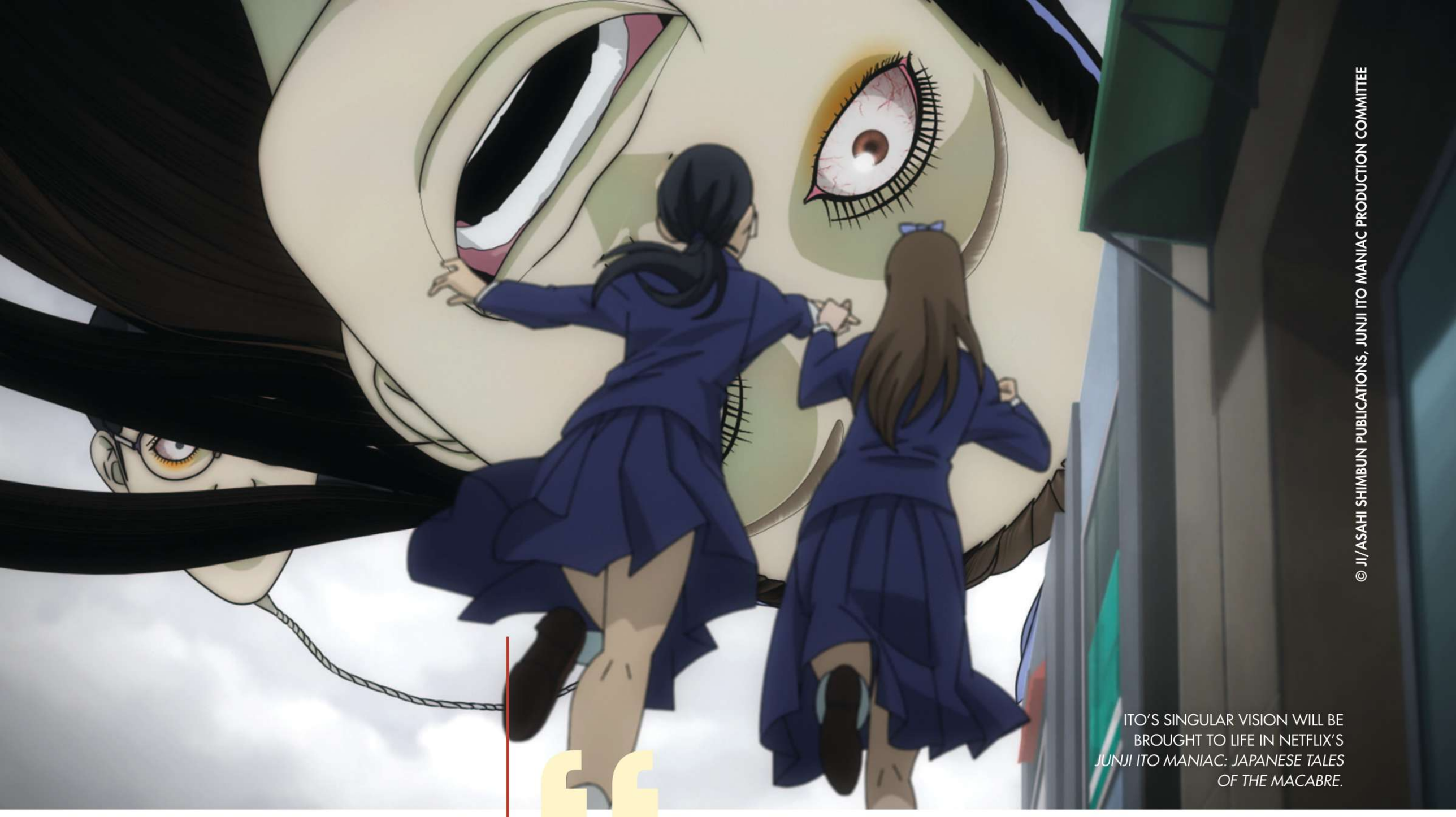
"Director Shinobu Tagashira is very passionate about *Maniac* on Netflix. She's a huge fan," Ito says. *Junji Ito Maniac* was first produced in 2018 under the title *Junji Ito Collection* at Japan's Studio DEEN, and includes stories with his iconic characters like Tomie and Sōichi, a sadistic boy whose teeth are lined with steel nails. "That [series] was very well made, but this time they're actually producing some of the stories that weren't produced last time. It's very well made and I'm very excited about it."

Other anticipated stories to be featured in *Junji Ito Maniac* include "The Hanging Balloons," "Ice Cream Truck," "Tomb Town," "Headless Statue," and "Library Vision." The Netflix series launches January 19, but *Uzumaki* doesn't have a release date as of the writing of this article.

"Hiroshi Nagahama, who's the director of [*Uzamaki*], has been working very hard, especially just trying to achieve the quality that he wants," Ito explains. "As a result, the production schedule has been delayed a little bit. Each time he apologizes to me, but to be honest, I'm almost happy to hear that they're taking the time to make it even better."

Before he became a world-famous manga artist with multiple adaptations in the works, Ito had very different plans. "When I graduated high school, for a period of time I was working as a dental technician. I had actually gone to a school to study that and I was working professionally. But as I was doing that, there was a manga magazine called *Gekkan Halloween* (*Monthly Halloween*), which was being published by Asahi Sonorama at the time, which is now Asahi Shimbun Publications Inc. [a media conglomerate]."





ITO'S SINGULAR VISION WILL BE BROUGHT TO LIFE IN NETFLIX'S *JUNJI ITO MANIAC: JAPANESE TALES OF THE MACABRE.*

Ito was a huge fan of the shōjo style horror manga that was published in the magazine. Shōjo style is a genre of comics aimed at a primarily female audience, and often explores stories that center around beautiful teenage girls. The horror magazine took these elements and twisted them, offering up a sinister edge to coming of age themes. Ito submitted his first Tomie comic to *Gekkan Halloween* for the Umezu Award, a manga competition that was run by Kazuo Umezu, the mastermind behind the famous series *The Drifting Classroom* (which was adapted into a live action film by Nobuhiko Ôbayashi, the director of the deliciously nutty fan favorite horror *House*). Ito received an honorable mention for *Tomie*, and tales about the immortal girl whose beauty leads her admirers to obsessive madness became serialized for the magazine. That is where Ito's legacy begins.

"The reason why I got drawn to horror is actually because I grew up with two older sisters and they owned a copy of Umezu's manga," Ito reflects. "I read that and that was the thing that really got me into it." In addition to Umezu, Ito admired Katsuhiro Otomo (*Akira*) and Hino Hideshi (*Panorama of Hell*) in his youth. "I would draw my manga as a hobby based on those kinds of works. Also, I was very influenced by the ideas and tone of the works by people like Yasutaka Tsutsui, who's a novelist, and Lovecraft. By the time I had written *Tomie*, I felt like I had already developed my style."

"There's something very vivid about the childhood memories that stay with you. I think that becomes the source of ideas and creativity." -Junji Ito

Although Ito has many influences, his work is as distinctive as the art that inspired it. "I really wanted to draw something that didn't look like typical manga... I really was influenced by [illustrations for sci-fi novels] and really tried to use [those artists'] style. So, in a sense, I was going for something that looked a little bit more real than the typical manga style."

The first *Tomie* chapter feels a bit like a reflection of Ito himself. In the comic, Tomie is brutally dismembered by her classmates, and her remains are identified by her dental records, a world that Ito was entrenched in before his success as a mangaka. Ito's past, particularly his childhood, oftentimes seeps into his work, his

deep-seated fears used as a barometer for the grotesque. "There are so many things you don't know as a child, and I think that the fact that you don't know, that makes things feel uncertain, and then that uncertainty makes it scary. Children's brains are like a blank slate and you're writing notes into it. So, a lot of times children's memories of childhood can be stronger than memories you have as an adult. There's something very vivid about the childhood memories that stay with you. I think that becomes the source of ideas and creativity."

Many of Ito's mangas explore the disturbing qualities of insect anatomy through body horror, like the people in *Uzumaki* slowly mutating into slimy human-size snails, or the father in "My Dearest Ancestors" whose centipede-like head contains the skulls of all the males in his family line. "When humans and insects kind of fuse together, I think it lends itself to horror… Insects, they have different anatomies from mammals. Compared to dogs or cats, I think they're harder to relate to. I think that's what leads to that fear."

Ito's fascination with body horror extends outside his own work. He's a huge fan of films like the original 1958 version of *The Fly* starring Vincent Price, particularly because the doctor's head morphs into that of an actual fly. He also has a fondness for both versions of *The Thing*, especially Carpenter's remake. Recently, he pays close attention to filmmakers like Ari Aster, James Wan, and Guillermo del Toro, but he doesn't often dip into new movies and loves to revisit classics while he works, like *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Suspiria* (1977).

Often Ito's characters are consumed by obsession, like the men and women who pine after Tomie, the spirals that consume *Uzumaki*'s town of Kurouzu-cho, or Goro's psychotic need to read every book in his parents' library in "Library Vision," a story featured in *Smashed*. "I do think horror and obsession stem from our insecurities and uncertainties. They're very closely tied together," Ito says. "You could say it's a chicken and an egg situation where you don't know which one sort of birthed the other, but I certainly think that doubt creates fear. It's also when you start thinking of how you want to avoid that uncertainty or fear that could lead to obsession."

One of Ito's most terrifying stories is also a personal favorite of his – "The Enigma of Amigara Fault." In it, his characters are controlled by their compulsions, engrossed by the urge to walk into human-shaped holes that suddenly appear on the side of the mountain after an earthquake. "When I came up with that idea, what interested me was the idea of a tunnel that's the exact same shape as you," Ito explains. "As I was thinking about that, I was trying to figure out why would someone want to enter that kind of tunnel. At first I wrote it where it was the people who had this desire to just enter it themselves, but I felt like that was a little bit too easy of a story choice, since that's something that I've used before. So instead, I made it where it was something they didn't really want to do, but something was drawing them in." The compulsion for your body to do something disconnected from your brain is eerie and jarring, and the uncertainty of what lies beyond the human-shaped chasms is profoundly unsettling.

With this year's adaptations and more likely to materialize in the future, Ito's work continues to bleed into the zeitgeist of horror. And he's not going anywhere. "When I first started out as a manga artist, I wasn't really sure how long I could sustain my career. As I was doing that, I kept on studying and writing notes about how to make dentures, so that I could return to my dental technician job if I had to. Looking back at where I am today, I have no wish to return to that. Writing manga is very difficult, but I feel that effort is very meaningful and worthwhile, and I want to continue. That's not to say that being a dental technician isn't meaningful, that's also a very artisan job, but I don't think I would want to return." 💀

Trouble with the Trees:

The Growth of Plant Horror

By Richard Newby

So often during this time of year, particularly for those of us in parts of the country who experience the change of seasons, we think of the trees, the flowers, the plant life as dying. Green turns to gold turns to brown, and then bare branches stretch out like hollow capillaries towards the sky until resurrection day. But underneath us, roots are slowly growing, passing information in the way only they can, taking in the rot buried beneath our feet for nourishment, and perhaps conspiring to take back this world that belonged to them long before it became home for any of us.

PULPY PROMOTIONAL ART FOR *THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS.*

Although we like to think of ourselves as masters of Earth with power over nature, our stories point to a fear that is ever-present. In all that plant life offers us in terms of the air we breathe, the medicines we create, the structures in which we reside, and the very pages on which we keep our own histories, stories, and secrets, we regard it as a retreat from death, a means to stave off an inevitability. Yet these plants, these woods we run into to escape death, can often be seen as co-conspirators in our demise. As Rush so elegantly put it, "there is unrest in the forest, trouble with the trees."

In *The Day of the Triffids* (1962), based on the novel by John Wyndham, a meteor shower blinds most of the world's population and carries alien plant spores to Earth. These spores gain sentience and a carnivorous hunger, leading to their growth into seven-foot-tall walking plants that attempt to take over the world. It's the blindness of mankind that nearly gives way to its demise, our literal inability to see the potential threat posed by a species similar to the world's largest population that, in so many forms, goes unnoticed. *Triffids* borrows more from *The War of the Worlds* (1953) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) than it does Wyndham's bleaker novel, but it furthers the conceit of many monster movies of the '50s and '60s in that the threat came from 'somewhere out there.' And even when the source of the plant wasn't alien, like Audrey Jr. in Roger Corman's *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1960), it was still a foreign threat, a Japanese gardener in this case, that was to blame.

With the exception of pod people in Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) and the infamous "tree-rape" scene in Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* (1981), the already niche horror of killer plants didn't get the light they needed to thrive in horror space as the genre shifted focus away from rubber aliens and atomic monsters. The plants were never entirely gone, but they largely went back to being atmosphere and hiding spaces for evil rather than the featured threat. Other exceptions included less serious send-ups to the films of the '50s and '60s like *Attack of*

the Killer Tomatoes (1978), *Creepshow*'s (1982) "The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill," and Frank Oz's musical remake of *Little Shop of Horrors* (1986).

But plant-based horror found new life in the pages of comic books as Alan Moore took readers into the Green. In 1984, Moore rocked the Swamp Thing mythos, revealing in *The Saga of Swamp Thing* #21, "The Anatomy Lesson," that the creature, previously believed to be the mutated scientist Alec Holland, was entirely composed of vegetation that had absorbed the dead Holland's consciousness. Swamp Thing wasn't Holland but an imitation, and the reveal, though traumatic for the monster, gave him a purpose beyond looking to cure himself and reclaim humanity that was never his. Moore reconstituted Swamp Thing as the latest avatar of the Green, the connected life-force of all plant life in the cosmos, governed by the Parliament of Trees.

While Swamp Thing's love of humanity led to a desire to create balance between humans and plant life, his nemesis Jason Woodrue, the Floronic Man, was the wrath of the woods, seeking humanity's destruction. "I am the pain and the bitterness of the woods! I am come to announce The Green Millennium! I am one with the wilderness … its will works through me," Woodrue intones in *The Saga of Swamp Thing* #23. In Woodrue's attack, humans are not left blameless victims of nature's wrath. "Destroy the creatures that would destroy us, that would destroy the ecosphere with their poisons and bulldozers! Cut them down like blighted wood. Let us have another green world!"

Where Moore thrived throughout his run was in examining the culpability of mankind as a threat to the Earth. But he also made it clear that humans were a necessity, like a virus strengthening the immune system of the planet. Men and animals are necessary to convert oxygen back into the gases plants need to survive, Swamp Thing reminds Woodrue before defeating his foliaged foil in the first of their many battles over who best serves the Earth as avatar of the Green. The argument asked the question of just how many humans were necessary to maintain that balance, and how many could be sacrificed for the greater good of the planet.

As pollution and global warming became of greater concern in the late 20th century, and capitalism took precedence over the environment, plant horror made a return to the movies. In 1981, Ronald Reagan made the false claim that trees created more pollution than automobiles, and this, on top of his administration's hatchet job on EPA regulations which resulted in a 22% cut of its budget, communicated a need for left-leaning, socially-minded horror. The potential destruction of the world could no longer be blamed on outside forces (be they aliens or commies), but mankind's own inability to change, particularly in the increasingly military- and big business-obsessed America. It was time for the tree-huggers to harvest their nightmares as both a means of entertainment and a warning.

If we couldn't change, then change would have to be forced upon us. Although it's arguably the least well-known of the four adaptations of Jack Finney's novel, Abel Ferrara's *Body Snatchers* (1993) suggests mankind deserves to be replaced. Set on a military base in Alabama and centered on Marti (Gabrielle Anwar), daughter of an EPA agent, Steve Malone (Terry Kinney), *Body Snatchers* exposes our fascination with military might, with vice, and with individualism that has destroyed the nuclear family unit. While the pod people in previous adaptations sought Earth to escape their own dying planet for a more hospitable one, the plant-like invaders in Ferrara's film recognize that human beings are a threat to themselves and the world because they've placed individual desire over the needs of a species. By replacing humans, the aliens are ultimately

attempting to save the world, and the violence and sensuality through which they do this suggest a passion for life that humans have all but forgotten until it's too late. The horror here comes from a place of logic, conform or die, a message delivered so eerily by Marti's stepmother, Carol (Meg Tilly): "Where you gonna go, where you gonna run, where you gonna hide? Nowhere… 'cause there's no one like you left." Marti, initially positioned as anti-conformist and disaffected, ends up becoming the very thing she fought against becoming, another ordinary human. "They had destroyed everyone I loved. Our reaction was only human." The film ends with a note of ambiguity over which is worse, becoming a pod person and existing within a system, or a cog in the war machine driven by revenge and escalating violence that can only end in self-destruction (in a figurative and literal sense).

While *Body Snatchers* ended with the remnants of humanity waging war against the plants, it would be 15 years until the plants declared a war of their own, just as Moore's Woodrue had dreamt of. 2008 saw the release of M. Night Shyamalan's *The Happening* and Carter Smith's *The Ruins*, films that on the surface are very different, but are equally vicious in their condemnation and punishment of mankind.

Shyamalan's film succinctly examines our unease and sense of powerlessness in a post-9/11 environment, while also highlighting the fact that the history of human actions led to this moment. We forced the plants to extremism; news items about pollution and the disappearance of bees in the film confirm this. "Plants have the ability to communicate with other species of plants. Trees can communicate with bushes, and bushes with grass, and everything in between," the Nursery Owner (Frank Collison) informs Elliot (Mark Wahlberg) and Alma Moore (Zooey Deschanel). The concept, an embellishment of real science, and similar to Moore's approach to the Green, is effectively terrifying in spite of critical attempts to reduce the film down to a telegraphed twist.

What's so shocking about the actions of the plants in *The Happening* is that it subverts the expectations of '50s and '60s plant horror and offers a different kind of body snatching, one that doesn't see plants replacing humans but forcing them into suicide. There is no angle of plants replicating human bodies in an attempt to unify them and make better use of their form. The events of *The Happening* are a warning, the Plant Kingdom's argument for genocide, and emphasize that they do not share a commonality with us or covet our image, despite being psychologically similar in their need for self-preservation.

In Smith's *The Ruins*, adapted from Scott Smith's novel, a group of white college students trespasses on Mayan Temple ruins on vacation in Mexico only to discover a hostile strain of vines that reproduce in open wounds and produce flowers that can imitate human sounds. The vines not only ravage the tourists' flesh but torment

As pollution and global warming became of greater concern in the late 20th century, and capitalism took precedence over the environment, plant horror made a return to the movies.

JORDY VERRILL GOES GREEN IN *CREEPSHOW*. ABOVE: ABEL FERRARA'S *BODY SNATCHERS*.

their minds, straining relationships in the group through their mimicry. The film serves as a condemnation of careless and invasive tourism by ignorant outsiders, but the fact that the origins of the vines, as well as their purpose, are never revealed speaks to the unknowable designs of nature. While *The Happening* sees plants rejecting physical forms of humanity, there is still an emotional component to their actions. The vines in *The Ruins* are emotionless and lack a means through which we can personify them, making their mimicry of voices all the more chilling because there's no discernable psychology or science behind it, no means through which to reason and avoid the outcome of annihilation.

The soil that gives life to plant horror is humanity's unconscious desire for self-destruction. Alex Garland explores this in *Annihilation* (2018), based on the novel by Jeff VanderMeer, which offers its own take on body snatching, after a meteorite affects a wildlife zone called The Shimmer, and an alien presence refracts genetic information, transforming the animals, plants, and humans in the zone into hybrids. This refraction doesn't seem to be without some form of intelligent design as Lena (Natalie Portman) and her compatriots, each dealing with their own self-destructive tendencies, are remade. While *Annihilation* isn't entirely based around plant horror, there's a scene in which the self-harming Josie Radek (Tessa Thompson) admires a group of plants, affected by hox genes, that have taken the structure of humans, before giving herself over to that form, becoming a plant, one with her surroundings for the first time in her life.

Annihilation offers a scientific reasoning for humans sacrificing who they were in order to become one with nature, but Ben Wheatley's *In the Earth* (2021) and Jaco Bouwer's *Gaia* (2021) take a more supernatural approach, rooted in folklore. In both films there is an ancient presence in the wood, suggested to be the very consciousness of the world itself. *Gaia* used the concept of the Cordyceps fungus for humans in the process of becoming plants in a South African forest that's home to a "god" whose roots make her the largest living organism on the planet. Gabi (Monique Rockman), a forestry employee, becomes the captive of a man, Barend (Carel Nel), and his son, Stefan (Alex van Dyk), who believe the world is ending and humans will be forced to evolve into plant-life in order to survive. *In the Earth* is less straightforward and follows a scientist, Martin Lowery (Joel Fry), and a park ranger, Alma (Ellora Torchia), who become subjects for a ritualistic experiment in the woods involving a standing stone and spirit of the woods known as Parnag Fegg. Both films treat the Earth as something beyond our understanding, a great change machine through which our current state as human beings is an unfinished process that physically, in *Gaia*, and mentally, in *In the Earth*, demands an autumnal transformation to facilitate our demise and rebirth into the perfect organism.

We may turn a blind eye to the trees as fall gives way to winter, but we should be aware that beneath our feet, there may be trouble brewing as the cost-to-benefit ratio of our existence is taken into account, an existence that can so easily be altered by messages shared along root systems and spores passed along the winds. Horror needs a seeding ground, and a conscious, sometimes vindictive ecosystem provides plenty of room to grow when it comes to mankind's destruction and evolution.

TESSA THOMPSON CHOOSES (PLANT) LIFE IN *ANNIHILATION*. ABOVE: GUESS THAT'S WHY IT'S CALLED THE *RUINS*.

JOIN THE TERROR TELETYPE!

News, editorials, rare images (as in, never before seen online)
from the Fango vault, special merch deals and more!

It's like getting a mini issue of FANGORIA
every week in your inbox.

MONSTERS • ALIENS • BIZARRE CREATURES

FIRST IN FRIGHT SINCE 1979

bit.ly/TerrorTeletype

THAT TIME JOHN BELUSHI PLAYED GODZILLA - TWICE

BY MICHAEL GINGOLD

In late July 1976, two momentous events in the history of pop culture occurred: NBC's *Saturday Night Live* wrapped up its first trailblazing, boundary-breaking season, and I saw my first Godzilla movie in a theater: a matinee showing of *Godzilla vs. Megalon*. Little did I know how those two disparate entertainments would collide the following year.

Godzilla vs. Megalon was the first Big G adventure to hit Stateside screens in four years (since 1972's *Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster*); *Godzilla vs. Gigan*, which predated *Megalon* by a year in Japan, opened a year after it in the U.S., under the misleading title *Godzilla on Monster Island*. Distributor Cinema Shares International gave *Megalon* a big promotional push that included a poster depicting the battling kaiju standing atop the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center — a canny takeoff on the promo art for the forthcoming *King Kong* remake, featuring the big ape atop the towers. A four-page comic adaptation (which got a couple of characters' names wrong) was distributed at theaters, and since it was an election year, so were "Godzilla for President" ballots. Never mind that the foreign-born monster was ineligible to govern our country; I and lots of other kids filled out the form for a chance to win posters, buttons, free movie tickets and "a monster skateboard."

Cinema Shares also scored a coup, and a first: they secured a network television deal for *Godzilla vs. Megalon*. Previously, the creature features of Toho and Daiei had been staples of syndicated stations (where I happily devoured them), but now the King of the Monsters would make his prime-time debut on NBC. And just to add some extra viewer appeal, one of *SNL's* "Not Ready for Prime Time Players" would be hosting the event.

NBC's airing of *Godzilla vs. Megalon* on March 15, 1977 was nonetheless a curious affair. The movie is one of the most kid-friendly (some, myself included, would say childish) in the Toho franchise, and yet it was given a 9 p.m. timeslot, following a Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus special. (The second half aired opposite the very first episode of that decidedly adult hit sitcom *Three's Company*!) And riffing inside a Godzilla suit for the bumpers was *SNL's* John Belushi, whose career-launching show aired way past the target audience's bedtime. Whoever scripted his lines didn't demonstrate a great deal of esteem for the subject at hand; at one point, the costumed comedian referred to *Godzilla vs. Rodan*, a film that doesn't exist. To make matters worse for diehard fans, *Megalon* was cut by nearly half its running time to fit a one-hour timeslot and accommodate the Belushi material.

That Godzilla garb had already been fairly well-traveled by the time it was worn by the future *National Lampoon's Animal House* star. Created by makeup/special effects artist Robert Short (who would go on to win an Oscar for *Beetlejuice*), it first appeared in Joe Dante and Allan Arkush's riotous 1976 New World Pictures comedy *Hollywood Boulevard*. The same year, at an early San Diego Comic-Con, during an "Irwin Awards" ceremony co-hosted by Short, filmmaker William Malone (*Creature, House on Haunted Hill*) donned the suit and danced to a Japanese Godzilla song. And then, the same week as the *Megalon* broadcast, Belushi put it on again for *Saturday Night Live* itself, on the night of March 19, '77.

This time, Belushizilla appeared in one of the recurring "Baba Wawa at Warge" segments featuring Gilda Radner's popular parody of legendary broadcast journalist Barbara Walters. The sketch had Wawa querying "Godziwwa" about his personal life, spoofing your typical touchy-feely celebrity interview. "I *was* hatched from an egg; you could say I came from a broken home!" the monster quipped at one point; later, Wawa asked, "How do you and your wife do it?" to which he replied, "Verrry carefully!" before telling her, "What I *really* want to do is direct." He then wrapped up the skit by stomping and smashing a miniature city, to the delight of the audience.

The Big G would make another appearance on *SNL* a few years later, though this time, it's unclear who his performer was. After the huge success of the Dustin Hoffman/Meryl Streep divorce drama *Kramer vs. Kramer*, the satirical series responded with the inevitable *Kramer vs. Godzilla*, styled as a trailer for the allegedly forthcoming feature, during its February 16, 1980 show. As the Kramers (Harry Shearer and Jane Curtin) argued with the judge (Bill Murray) against giving custody of their child to the prehistoric beast, an actor in a decidedly cheaper-looking suit (which looked more like Frogzilla) just gestured and roared a couple of times. *SNL*, it turned out, was kind of like *kaiju* cinema: You could tell when the creators cared about making their monster look good, and about giving him a personality.

SPOILERS & SPLATTER

HALLOWEEN ENDS

BY CHRISTOPHER NELSON

Halloween Ends is the end of an era, and it's very bittersweet. I've been so honored to be part of this legacy, and lucky to have worked with the fine artists at Vincent Van Dyke Effects. We work well together designing and creating all these fun things. Below is the aftermath of what is a "test" head for Dr. Mathis' demise. The bag over his head was sucked into his mouth via a vacuum, with blood tubes sourced at stabbing points to bleed from within.

Right: EVERYONE is gonna want one of these masks, right? Sculpt for Corey's Scarecrow mask designed by me and sculpted by Daniele Tirinnanzi.

Above: What did you do?? Corey (Rohan Campbell) after having stabbed himself in the neck. Tough gag using prosthetic, magnets, blood, 3D printed knife and more. Not as easy as you'd think to get it all in camera in one take.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER NELSON

Above: Rohan Campbell after going to town on the Dr. Mathis dummy. That's a "sorry not sorry" face if I've ever seen one.

Right: "Jimmy Shape" parts! The fake hand was for stabbing a knife through, pinning to the table. And there is our unmasked Michael Myers after Laurie slices his throat. Do you know how weird and exciting it was to be the one to kill The Shape?

PHOTO BY JAMIE LEE CURTIS

I love this photo of me and James Jude Courtney. It was taken by the incomparable Jamie Lee Curtis herself. Jamie is an exceptional photographer, able to capture the feeling, heart, and energy of the moment while somehow telling a different story.

Above: THE MASK! Oh the controversy! *Halloween* fans do not mess around when it comes to this, and I have hundreds if not thousands of messages proving so. Some even containing poop emojis! It is a character all its own. We are proud of what we've done with all three.

I never thought you could be bullied by band geeks. I had nicknames for all these characters and their demises. "Billy Drumsticks," "Blowtorch Terry," "Mashed Margo." The Terry dummy had an articulated neck and mouth for realistic movement while being blowtorched. It also had LED lights in his cheeks to help with the glowing. They all had it coming.

Above: Finishing makeup for DJ "Willy the Kid." This was to be an extra for the special features DVD and a very last-minute build/addition. I was shocked it ended up in the theatrical cut. Apparently, people really liked it. It was David Gordon Green's idea to throw the tongue on the turntable.

Above Right: "Margo" dummy with actress Joey Harris. We made multiple heads to stomp, crush AND run over with a truck.

The beginning of the film features the demise of "Jeremy." Poor kid. The final product in the film is actually quite effective and disturbing. Beautiful articulated dummy made by VVDFX (held here by my Key FX Artist Eric Porn). Love our cheap wolfman mask design. Is it bad that I couldn't stop laughing after every THUD from dropping this three stories over and over again while shooting?

GRAPPLING WITH HOPE

BY ERIC VESPE

EXPLORING THE UNEXPECTED THROUGHLINE OF FRANK DARABONT'S STEPHEN KING ADAPTATIONS.

Over the years, Frank Darabont has proven himself to be not only a master filmmaker but one that fundamentally understands how to translate Stephen King's words to the big screen. Up to this point, he has written and directed three of King's feature film adaptations, and all of them range from "fantastic" to "all-timer."

He started with The *Shawshank Redemption* in 1994 and followed that up with another period prison story, *The Green Mile*, in 1999. Then, in 2007, he traumatized us all with his version of *The Mist*.

Doing my day-to-day work for *The Kingcast* (ahem, available wherever you get your podcasts courtesy of the FANGORIA Podcast Network), I've had the pleasure of revisiting all these titles multiple times over the last few years, and something recently jumped out to me — there's a progression at work between these three films that seemingly track a slow descent into nihilism.

This is most notable in the first and last films. *The Shawshank Redemption* is literally about holding on to hope. Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) is an innocent man incarcerated for decades, but he never gives up hope. He even spends his time in Shawshank making the lives of his fellow inmates, the guards, and the administration better. Between spearheading the library project, using his banker education to help the staff with their taxes, and cooking the books for the crooked warden, Dufresne's influence was positive for just about everybody in that prison.

Think of the sequence where he plays that opera record through the prison's PA system. Dufresne pays for it with a month in solitary confinement, but Red (Morgan Freeman) tells us that for a brief moment in time the inmates weren't trapped in a cage, transported by the music. When Dufresne arranges for the roofer group to get ice-cold beers and a rest from work, there's a similar sentiment from Red. For the first time in a long, long time they all felt like free men.

The Shawshank Redemption is all about hope, even in the face of great evil. In the last act we're made to believe Dufresne's hope is flagging, to the point that when he doesn't show up for muster, we're half convinced he's following in the footsteps of poor Brooks and will be found hanging in his cell.

At this point, his innocence is all but unprovable, thanks to Warden Norton resorting to murdering the only person that could help him prove he didn't kill his wife. All seems hopeless.

Turns out patient ol' Dufresne has been slowly moving all the pieces in place to make his escape, which not only gains him his freedom but makes life better for the rest of the inmates in Shawshank. Yes, Dufresne absconds with Warden Norton's money, but he also takes the time to alert the media and authorities of all

the crooked stuff going down in the prison, resulting in actual change.

King's original story ends with Red on a bus after gaining his parole, saying he hopes to see his good friend, Dufresne, again. Darabont's adaptation goes a step further and shows the two reuniting on that beautiful beach in Zihuatanejo, a move that Darabont has said was made at the insistence of the studio. He wanted to end it with the more ambiguous message of hope from Red, like King's novella, which would have underlined that theme even more strongly.

For the record, I side with the studio note on this one. After spending the entire time behind the same walls as prisoners, you need to see that big, blue ocean and white sand beach.

Now, let's compare that to the theme of Darabont's adaptation of *The Mist*. *Shawshank* is a story about holding on to hope. *The Mist* is a cautionary tale about losing hope, and the price you pay when you do.

Funnily enough, both original King stories end on a note of hope. There's Red's hope of seeing his friend again in *Shawshank*, and David Drayton's hope that he and the other survivors can eventually come out the other side of the mist. Darabont's adaptations altered both endings — *The Mist* in particular goes from a hopeful to a terribly bleak ending for our lead character.

In the grand scope of things, the ending of Darabont's *The Mist* is a happier ending than King's original. Wait, hear me out!

The novella ends with the survivors staying over at a Howard Johnson's, finding no end to the mist. There is a single word they hear over the radio. The name of a city — Hartford. Is that where the vestiges of humanity reside? Maybe that's where the mist ends? The reader never finds out.

The ending of the movie is absolutely brutal — for Drayton (Thomas Jane). For the rest of humanity, things work out peachy keen. Somehow, the army has figured out how to push the mist and all its creatures back. Mankind lives to fight another day.

In that way, Darabont's ending is a much happier one than King's original. In the novella, we're left with the very real possibility that the mist has taken over the entire world, and our protagonists will never find their way clear of it.

Darabont's version of Drayton lost hope. The encounter with the cultish Mrs. Carmody (Marcia Gay Harden) at the store, the death of his wife, and the eldritch horror behemoth that walks across the freeway robbed the character of his hope. He didn't have Dufresne's unshakable constitution, and as such, the best he can offer by the end of the movie is to fulfill the promise he made to his son that he wouldn't let the monsters get him.

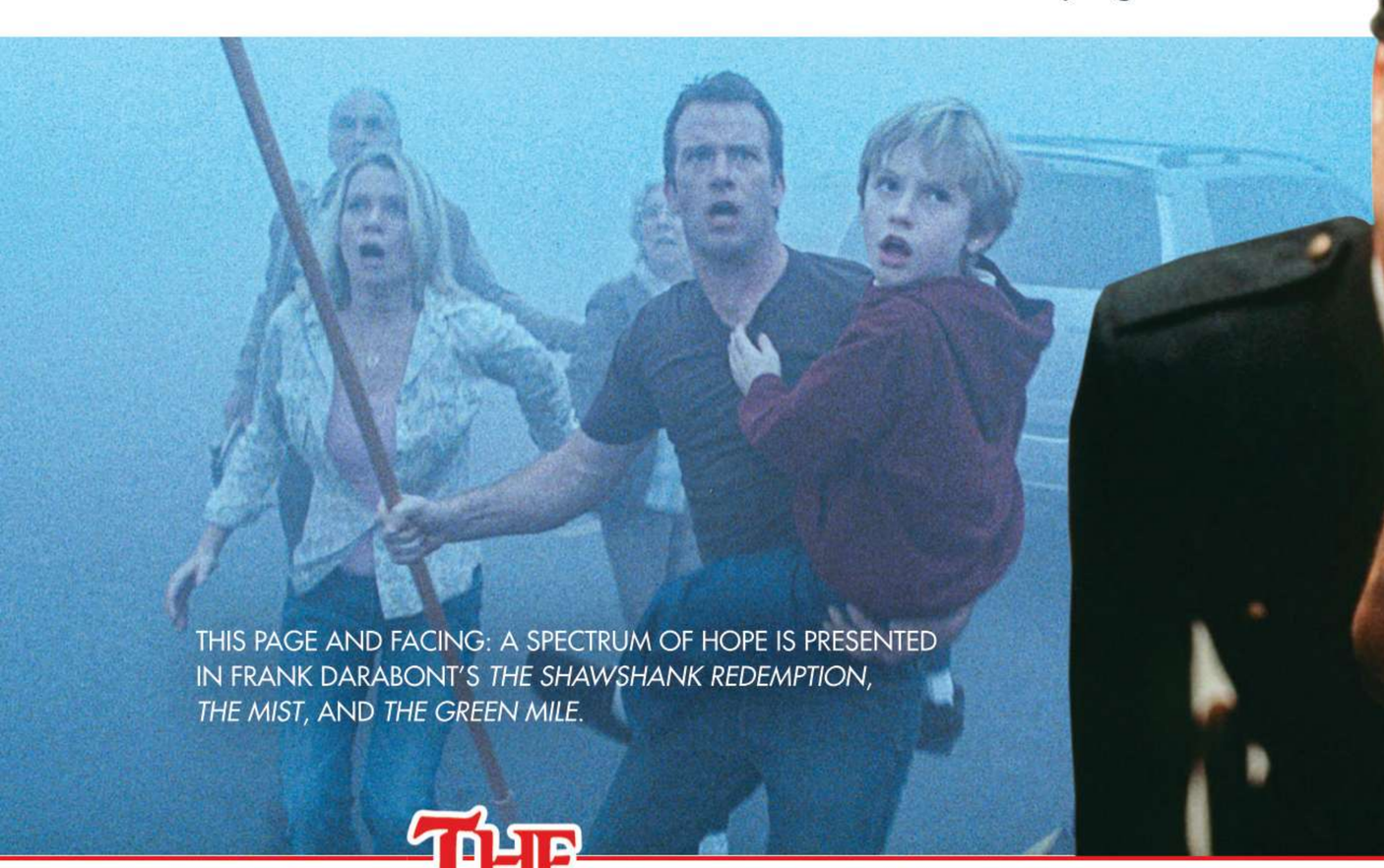
If he had held on to hope and waited just five more minutes, that carload of people would have celebrated the victory against the monsters of the mist alongside the rest of humanity.

The Green Mile makes an interesting stepping stone between those two thematically opposite stories because it also ends on a pretty dour note. Paul Edgecomb (Tom Hanks) reveals that he's sort of cursed for his part in the execution of John Coffey (Michael Clarke Duncan). He has some of the man's gift, which grants him an unnaturally long life, but that means he's doomed to see his loved ones die as he sits with the guilt of what he allowed to happen.

In many ways, the ending of *The Green Mile* is the gloomiest of the bunch. We see that Mr. Jingles, a mouse that also has some of John Coffey's gift, is still kicking around, which leaves the main character to wonder if a mouse can live that long, and how much longer does he have to wallow in this forced purgatory.

Was it just happenstance that the King stories Darabont brought to the silver screen had this trajectory into nihilism or was this the result of the Hollywood studio system wearing down this talented writer/director? I suppose it's likely a combination of the two things, but I hope it's more the former because I'd like to see another Darabont-King adaptation someday. I hope his work isn't an indication of giving up on the industry.

I hope. 💀



THIS PAGE AND FACING: A SPECTRUM OF HOPE IS PRESENTED IN FRANK DARABONT'S *THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION*, *THE MIST*, AND *THE GREEN MILE*.

THE KINGCAST

You can listen to Scott Wampler (@ScottWamplerRIP) and Eric Vespe (@EricVespe) every Wednesday on THE KINGCAST (@Kingcast19), a Stephen King podcast for Stephen King obsessives, brought to you by the FANGORIA Podcast Network.

The Unexpected (And Highly Welcome) Return of *My Bloody Valentine*

By Brian Collins • Illustration by Gary Pullin

A new novelization lets fans revisit a slasher classic in a brand-new way.

When the conversation of the best "one and done" slasher movies comes up, it can't possibly run long without someone mentioning *My Bloody Valentine*, which hit theaters in February of 1981 and disappeared shortly thereafter. And while it had its fans (including Quentin Tarantino) and the obligatory remake, something seemed forever elusive: merch! Those of us who loved it have had to sit back and watch as other cult faves were blessed with action figures and the like (it's still kind of insane that you can buy *Halloween III* toys at Target, right?), while Harry Warden went woefully underrepresented outside of a few t-shirts.

But things have been changing. In 2020, Waxwork put out a beautiful vinyl of the film's much-loved soundtrack by Paul Zaza, right around the same time as the release of a Scream Factory Blu-ray with an accompanying Warden figure from NECA, and last year there was a Kickstarter for an officially licensed board game, the success of which clearly proved the fanbase was big enough to warrant such endeavors. Thus, many of the game's key collaborators opted for another collectible in time for Valentine's Day 2023: an official novelization, which has not only the blessing of original director George Mihalka, but his direct involvement as well.

"George is the key here, getting all of his production stories directly and understanding his vision for this," author Armando Muñoz tells FANGORIA. Muñoz is a longtime fan of the film after discovering it on VHS in the mid-'80s ("The film has great flavor, like a Valentine chocolate candy with a surprise gooshy cherry center. I still taste that flavor from the film to this day."), and he has some experience with holiday horror, having penned the Thanksgiving slasher *Turkey Day* and a sequel titled *Turkey Kitchen*, all of which makes him an ideal candidate to tackle this surprise project.

It's rare to see a novelization come along this late after its namesake's theatrical run; their primary function is to advertise the upcoming film (and, when it's an R-rated one like this, let younger fans experience the story when their parents won't take them to see it) and that time is obviously long since past. But as Muñoz explains, "Horror fans want their book shelves to look like their movie shelves, lined with their favorite titles." With a burning desire to try his hand at novelizations, Muñoz campaigned for the gig and eventually got the blessing of Anthony Masi of MasiMedia, who is spearheading the project.

Mihalka clearly believed in the author as well, and has been supplying him with materials dating back to the original production, including breakdowns of how the effects shots worked. Which means that, yes, we will finally be getting the skinny on Mike and Harriet's infamous double-impalement death, which was completely cut after the MPAA told Mihalka, straight-up, "That scene cannot stay in this movie or you've got an X rating!" Of course, *MBV* wasn't the only film to get cut to ribbons by the censors, but it was the one that played scapegoat for a tragic death. "We were unlucky," Mihalka explains. "John Lennon got killed just a couple months before our release date. There was a major backlash against gratuitous violence, and most studios are risk-averse, so instead of fighting for it, and because of the timing [of the film's namesake holiday approaching], the studio had to acquiesce and hope for the best."

The way the scenes were shot contributed to the film's theatrical neutering (at least one critic called it "My BLOODLESS Valentine"). "The idea was that all of these FX were going to be shown in single shots, so we didn't have additional shots [to cut to], it wasn't planned that way," Mihalka explains. So without the coverage that can salvage some of these gory moments with cutaways, entire scenes like Mike and Harriet's had to go. The scene never resurfaced, much to the chagrin of both the fans and Mihalka; while some of the footage was eventually recovered and restored for the Scream Factory Blu-ray (cleaned up from a previous Lionsgate DVD), the double-impalement was still MIA. Mihalka estimates that the restored version still only has "65 or 70% of what we intended to do."

Naturally, finally letting folks know exactly what happened in the sequence was a priority for the novel, which obviously won't be beholden to the MPAA's inconsistent whims. And per Muñoz, it sounds worth the wait: "It's no surprise the MPAA would not let one single frame of this scene through."

But the novel's expansions and diversions aren't just limited to

the death scenes, as Mihalka has been able to supply the author with biographical details about both the characters and the town of Valentine's Bluff, information that was excised early on as John Beaird's script was reworked to accommodate the production's schedule and budget. Muñoz is particularly excited to give more dimension to Sarah (Lori Hallier's character), explaining "the final cut of the film makes her more passive, whereas in the script she's much more assertive in her independence and love life. I loved presenting a stronger version of Sarah." Hero TJ (the late Paul Kelman) will also have some of his vague backstory finally explained, per Mihalka. "We'll know what happened to him when he left to go out west, his whole adventure out there and how it failed, and how he came back with his tail between his legs. All of that back story that will affect the understanding and offer more insight into his character."

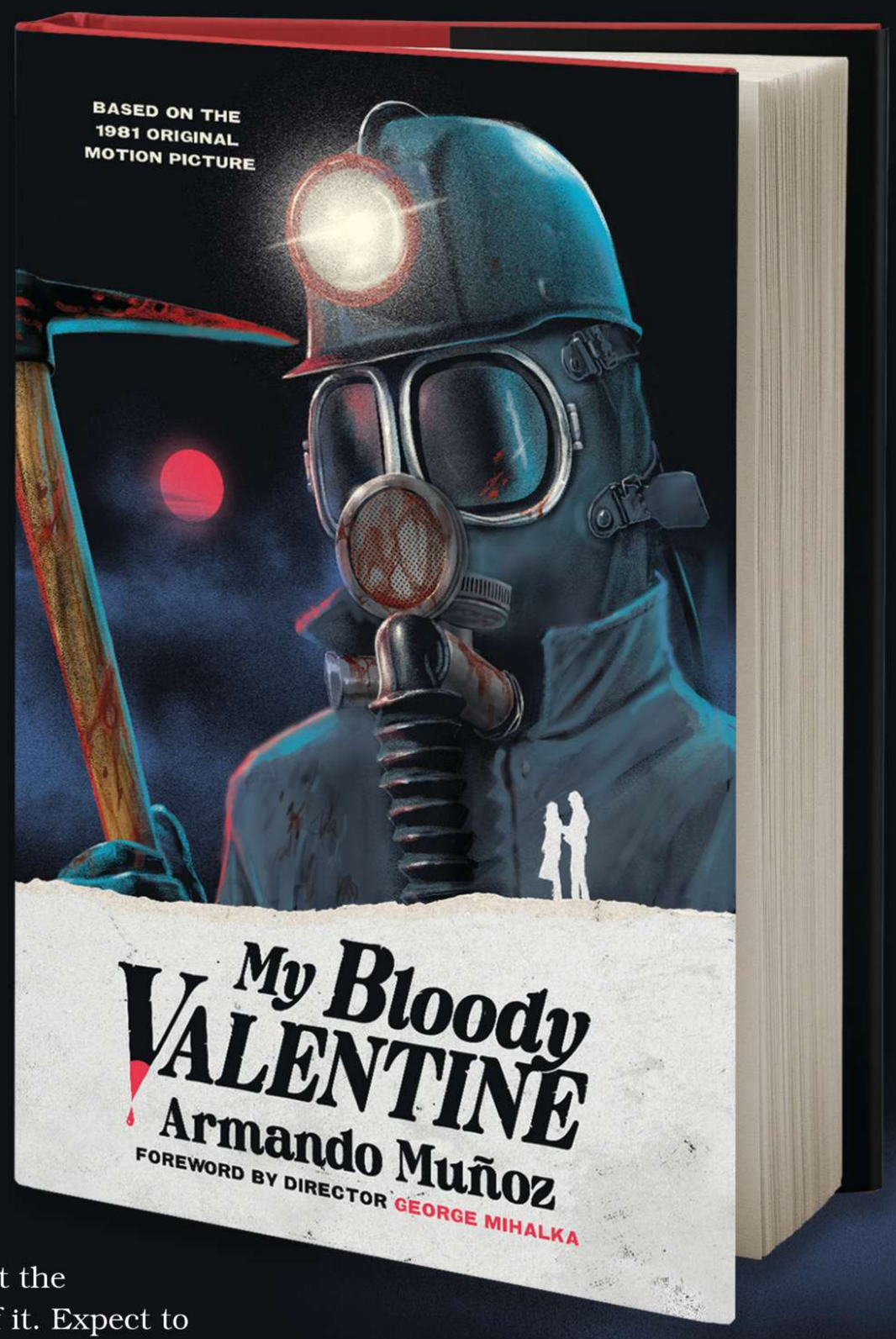
One major difference between a theoretical "original release" novelization and the one they're writing now is that it can plant the seeds for a sequel story, something Mihalka is still hoping to do someday. "George has a strong idea for a follow-up," Muñoz spills, "and as one of the few who knows where *My Bloody Valentine* will go, it's beyond exciting. There are clues and details being worked into this novelization that will set up the foundation for his follow-up, which I really hope the world will get to experience in film or book form in the future." He's also tossing in some easter eggs for fans of the director, including some for the Fango faithful: "Hardcore FANGORIA readers will be able to spot them, if they are familiar with the incredible six-page interview with George in issue #11, when Fango introduced *My Bloody Valentine* to their bloodthirsty audience." To the archives!!!

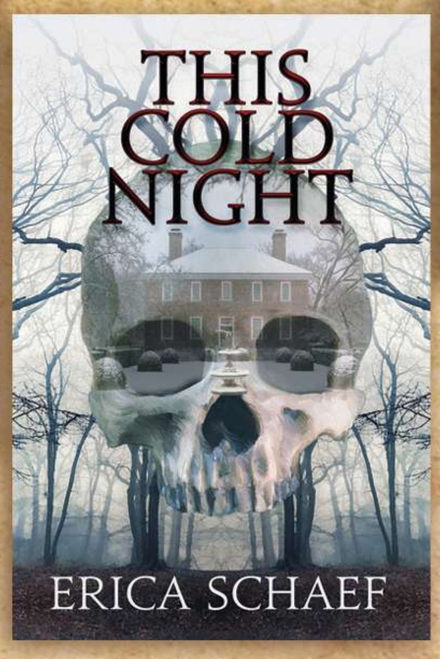
The book will also have an extra chapter exclusive to its first edition, though neither the director nor the author are willing to spill what that section of the book entails (when grilled, Mihalka laughs, "As much as I'd like to talk about it, I was asked not to! Please don't get me in trouble!"). We *do* know that it will have gorgeous cover art by Gary Pullin on the dust jacket, with a different, minimalist cover on the book itself, and both Muñoz and Mihalka will be autographing the first run of the finished work, which is planned to run about 300 pages.

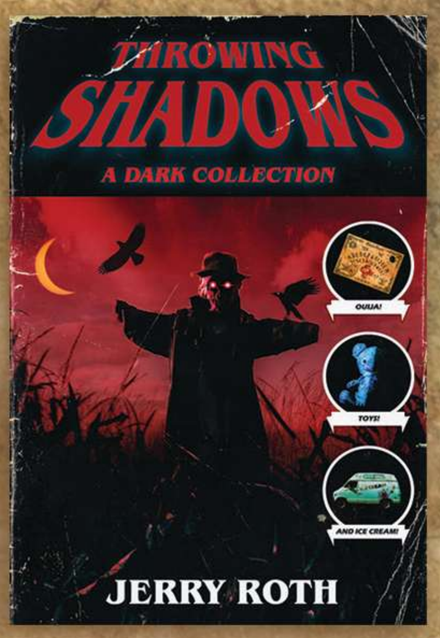
A board game is also coming along around the same time, and Mihalka did spill on some other things we can look forward to. "If these things work out, there's a plan to do a video game. Cinepix is definitely on track to try and get *My Bloody Valentine* back into the fans' minds again. They have someone new working with them who is very good at the merchandising aspect of it. Expect to see a lot more of it." As for Muñoz, he's not straying far from the holiday horror genre. "With continued collaboration with MasiMedia, we are discussing a series of beloved titles [to novelize]. I can reveal the next one, and it is indeed another dream film with a great story: *Silent Night, Deadly Night*."

Of course, none of this would be happening if not for *My Bloody Valentine*'s longevity, something that Mihalka attributes to things that are a lot more resonant with audiences than this or that murder scene. "It's the honesty, it's the camaraderie, it's characters that one can relate to… there's nothing supernatural about the film, it's not Michael Myers or Jason being burned alive and coming back the next day, it's real. This actually could happen. The characters are all relatively sympathetic and identifiable, and it also has this natural, easygoing humor."

Without these things, it's safe to say the film would be largely forgotten by all but the hardcore. It took 40 years, but Harry Warden is finally getting all the merch and (hopefully) sequels that his fellow masked murderer from Paramount was blessed with all along. There were literal decades of absolutely nothing, but now we have a soundtrack, an action figure, a board game, a book, a possible video game, and maybe - finally! - an actual sequel to look forward to. After all this time, *My Bloody Valentine* fans' broken hearts can finally start to heal. 💀







Brigids Gate PRESS
brigidsgatepress.com

JOIN HOSTS DR. REBEKAH MCKENDRY (PROFESSOR, FANGORIA, WRITER-DIRECTOR) AND ELRIC KANE (PROFESSOR, PURE CINEMA PODCAST, FILMMAKER) AS THEY TAKE A DEEP LOOK AT THE HORROR GENRE.

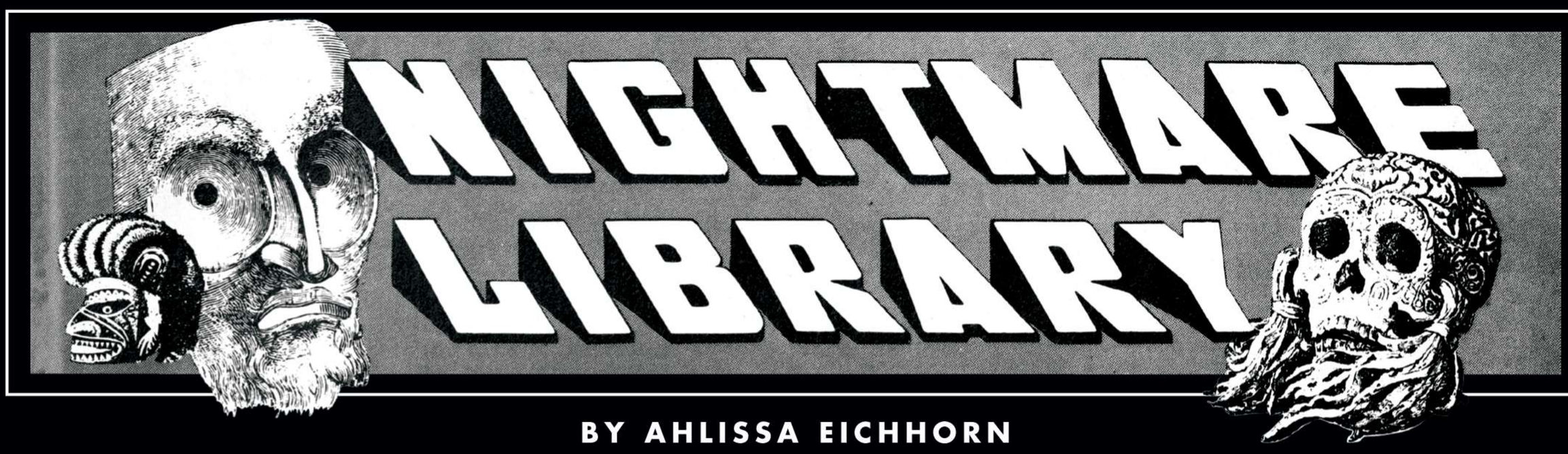
Each show explores a specific part of horror history, key players, franchises, deep cut titles, important films, and interviews with some of the genres' biggest icons.

LISTEN NOW

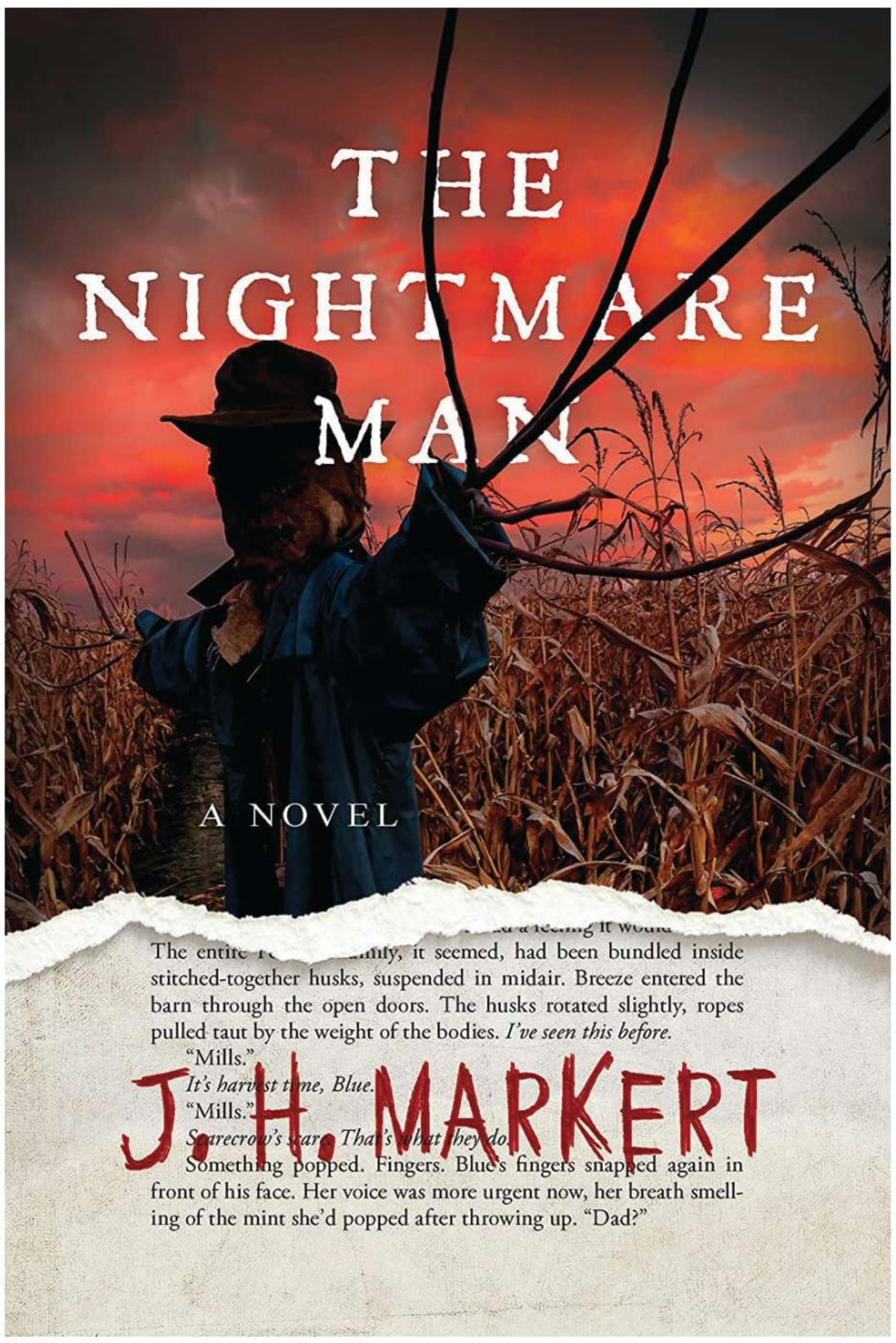
Listen on Apple Podcasts

Spotify

STITCHER



BY AHLISSA EICHHORN


THE
NIGHTMARE
MAN
A NOVEL
The entire ... family, it seemed, had been bundled inside stitched-together husks, suspended in midair. Breeze entered the barn through the open doors. The husks rotated slightly, ropes pulled taut by the weight of the bodies. *I've seen this before.*
"Mills."
It's harvest time, Blue.
"Mills."
Scarecrow's scare. That's what they do.
Something popped. Fingers. Blue's fingers snapped again in front of his face. Her voice was more urgent now, her breath smelling of the mint she'd popped after throwing up. "Dad?"
J.H. MARKERT

THE NIGHTMARE MAN

DUE OUT:
1/10/2023

AUTHOR:
J.H. Markert

PUBLISHER:
Crooked Lane Books

The Nightmare Man is J.H. Markert's first foray into traditional horror, but you'd never guess it. With an expansive cast of characters and an eerie backdrop of grotesque murders, the plot of this debut horror novel doesn't hold back. It takes place in New Haven, where successful novelist Ben Bookman spent his childhood flitting in and out of his ancestral home, Blackwood Mansion.

The estate remains home to family tragedy and small-town mysteries, namely the room containing thousands of empty books that must never be opened. Ben retreated here to finish his latest novel, *The Scarecrow*, and ever since that fateful weekend, multiple murders have sprung up that mimic his gruesome writings. The local detectives on the case are wary of the Bookmans' ruinous history, which positions Ben as the main suspect. Struggling to protect both his reputation and strangers' lives, he braves the depthless past of Blackwood to confront what fractured his family years ago.

That's only the tip of the summary iceberg. Lore of mare creatures and the Japanese spirits called Baku are the driving force of the narrative, with room enough for seasoned cop banter and Arkham Asylum-type killer mayhem.

"In general, I've always been fascinated by nightmares and dreams, and where they might come from, so that was always something I'd wanted to explore. In a sense, I wanted to take these childhood concepts of night scares and play them out on an adult stage."

The author also cites the David Fincher film *Seven* as a major influence, alongside HBO's *True Detective* and *The Outsider* by Stephen King. There are a lot of elements going on here, but it doesn't stall its momentum. It's very much a coordinated dance grounded by an understanding of pacing and, well, fright. When asked about his formula for writing the scary stuff, Markert had this to say:

"Atmosphere and tone have to be front and center. Often, when I first start a book, I don't even know yet who the killer is. I'll have a general idea, yes, but as far as fleshing out the killer or the bad guy or the monster, I'm learning all about them right along with my characters."

The journey into the horror genre doesn't necessarily begin here for Markert. Though his past books are mainly historical fiction, they're not completely devoid of bleakness or dodgy mystery. His third and fourth novels, *All Things Bright and Strange* and *What Blooms from Dust,* could be considered terror type in certain crowds, but come with a "lack of gore" that helped define *The Nightmare Man* as horror with a capital "H." Markert's future in genre is already set in motion, having recently completed two horror film novelizations. In addition, the author eagerly awaits his return to the world of Ben Bookman, where he hopes intrigued readers will join him.

THEY SAY TO WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW, BUT THAT ADVICE SITS A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY WITH HORROR AUTHORS.

After all, experiencing constant unspeakable terror isn't exactly a viable career path. What they can do is make their protagonists into authors to add a touch of realism to the stories they dream up. It's a trope that, when done correctly, tells a riveting story while giving insight into its creator. The newest additions to the Nightmare Library toss their hats into the ring and discuss the process of crafting their own bookish heroes.

GOTHIC

DUE OUT:
2/03/2023

AUTHOR:
Philip Fracassi

PUBLISHER:
Cemetery Dance Publications

Philip Fracassi has made his career from scares. As a self-described writer of "supernatural thrillers" that focus on story and suspense, the author decided to make his latest novel a love letter to the greats he grew up reading. That pivot meant more meanness, more viscera, and more old-school horror in the form of *Gothic*. The wicked tale revolves around writer Tyson Parks and his fading career as a best-selling novelist.

Hoping to inspire him during his dry spell, his partner Sarah gifts him an extravagant birthday present — a monstrous antique desk embellished with strange, mythical carvings. The desk mystifies Tyson and compels him to compose diabolic gospel, making him an instant hit in the publishing world, but a violent shadow of himself. His dreams border on blasphemous, and he can't seem to shake the old, decrepit man that watches him from the darkness. Meanwhile, a desperate woman has tasked private detectives across the globe with tracking her family's cursed heirloom before its sinister purpose is unleashed by its oblivious new owner.

It's tough to ignore the grittiness of *Gothic*. There's the omnipresent threat of black magic and unearthly powers to worry about, alongside the unpredictably cruel acts of man. With more than a handful of triggering scenes, the author comments on his preparation for tackling these moments:

"The only way to write these scenes — for me, anyway — is to just plow through and get them done (usually with a healthy pour of scotch nearby), write them in one sitting, preferably without interruption, so I can hold onto that intensity throughout. Often, when I know I have a heavy scene coming up, I'll hold off on starting it until I know I have a clean window of time to get it all written down in one go. Later, I can review the scene more clinically and clean up what needs cleaning up, but on the day it's gotta be a barrel run right through the heart of it. No prisoners."

However, this story is by no means impalpable. The commentary on the publishing world, being a professional writer, and ordinary relationships gives it that needed air of reality to contrast the immorality that creeps higher and higher as the pages dwindle. It's a literary treat that delivers what it promises to horror fans, but Fracassi welcomes readers of every variety.

"Fans of thrillers, mysteries, or even character dramas and literary fiction, would find a lot to love from books filed under the 'horror' category. I hope that, as horror fiction continues to expand its breadth of storytelling, more readers will test the waters and not be put off by labels. My best-case scenario is a reader close [*Gothic*] with a smile on their face, thinking, 'Man, that was wild!' And, you know, hopefully, give them a nightmare or two."

Contributors' Crypt

Below are social media handles for some of this issue's contributors. Don't make it weird!

Brian Collins - @BrianWCollins

Barbara Crampton - @barbaracrampton

Matt Donato - @DoNatoBomb

Ahlissa Eichhorn - @hauntedeadlines

Brett Gallman - @brettgallman

Britt Hayes - @MissBrittHayes

Stephen Graham Jones - @SGJ72

Christopher Nelson - @cnelsonfx

Richard Newby - @RICHARDLNEWBY

Jenny Nulf - @jennyleighx33

Gary Pullin - @GhoulishGary

Amanda Reyes - @madefortvmayhem

Ryan Scott - @RyanScottWrites

Paul Tremblay - @paulGtremblay

Eric Vespe - @EricVespe

CLASSIFIED AD VAULT

The existence of M3GAN implies the existence of M1GAN and M2GAN. Huge if true.

Put Devon Sawa in every issue!

Okay? And I'm supposed to know this? Or be a f****** mind reader?

Happy birthday, Suzanne! You're the best mom and ultimate final girl in my mind. Love, Marisa (your little monster)

Queen Bee, you're one tough broad. I love you.

FANGORIA: A further descent into depravity and psychosis, four times a year!

So many horror bros want to F around, but are not okay with finding out. Have they even watched these movies?

Who would win in a fight - Michael Myers, Jason Voorhees, Buzz Aldrin, or Oliver Reed?

SEEKING: An accomplished baker in Haddonfield with a sweet heart and sweeter tooth. The only thing wicked about you should be your positively sinful confectionary skills. Let's get together and make...evil pies tonight.

Does a Cocaine Bear shit in the woods?

Got a taste for spooky tales and craving something novel? Check out *13 Tracks to Frighten Agatha Black*, now available on Blu-Ray.

To my fearless leader of the Church of Friend, your congregant wants to know how closely you read each issue.

Showing love to Ama and her clothing company Poltergeists and Paramours! Very cute original designs with styles you won't see anywhere else! From slashers to *Yellowjackets*, *Jawbreakers*, and more! Visit PoltergeistsandParamours.com for all your clothing needs.

Texas Chainsaw 3D is one of the best entries and so so many of you are wrong about it.

To my adorable wife, thank you for taking the journey into Horror with me!

AIN'T SLAYED NOBODY blends Horror RPG tabletop roleplaying and audio drama. There is no telling who is human anymore in this psychological horror podcast that wrestles with the traumas of the past. Subscribe today at AINTSLAYEDNOBODY.COM

Things to Come

This spring, things are rising. Not only will Nicolas Cage's Dracula emerge from the shadows in RENFIELD, but Raimi's Deadites will, well, rise in EVIL DEAD RISE! And your blood pressure will be on the rise when you see PROJECT WOLF HUNTING. It's all happening in April!

MISSED AN ISSUE?
CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE SHOP FOR BACK ISSUES.
Supplies are limited!
bit.ly/FangoBackIssues
FANGORIA
2020's BEST KILLS
FOUND FOOTAGE: THE SECON
PSYCHO GOREMAN Has Some Psycho Goro, Man
The Heartland Horror of HONEYDEW
THE HORRIFIC ACTION OF TIMO TJAHJANTO
EGGERS GETS EPIC IN THE NORTHMAN
THE GRUESOME GROWING PAINS OF HATCHING
X BRINGS BACK '70S SLASHERS
MARY HARRON ON RELIC
MIKE FLANAGAN TALKS BLY MANO
MONSTERS · ALIENS · BIZARRE CREATURES

TIME WAITS FOR NO ONE

MICHAEL MADSEN COSTAS MANDYLOR SARAH FRENCH

DEATH COUNT

OUT NOW ON VOD

MAHAL EMPIRE PRODUCTIONS

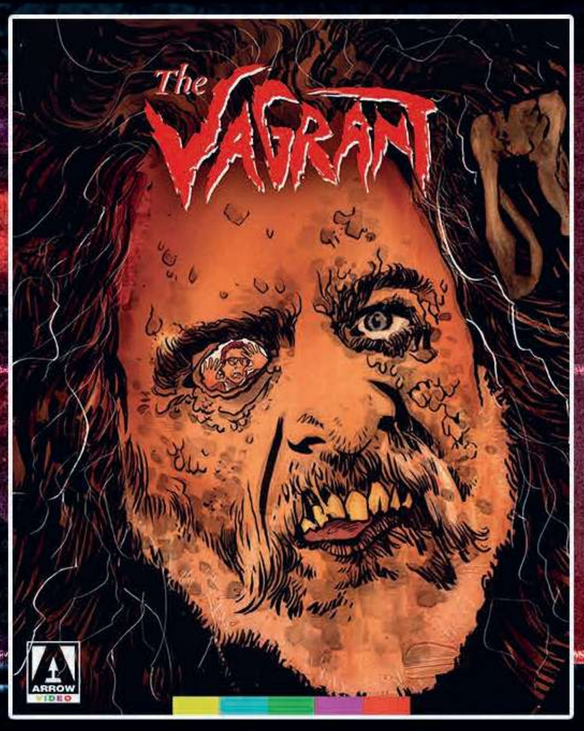
BLAEN-Y-MAES BOOTLEG FILMS

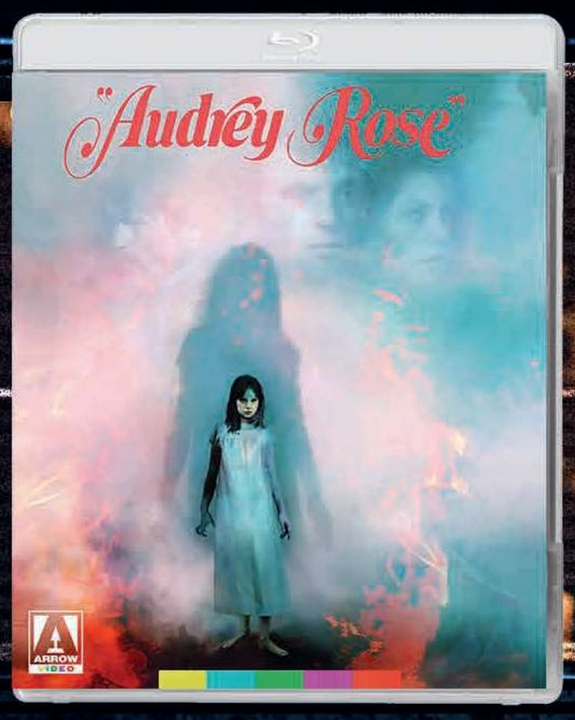
MEZEK FILMS

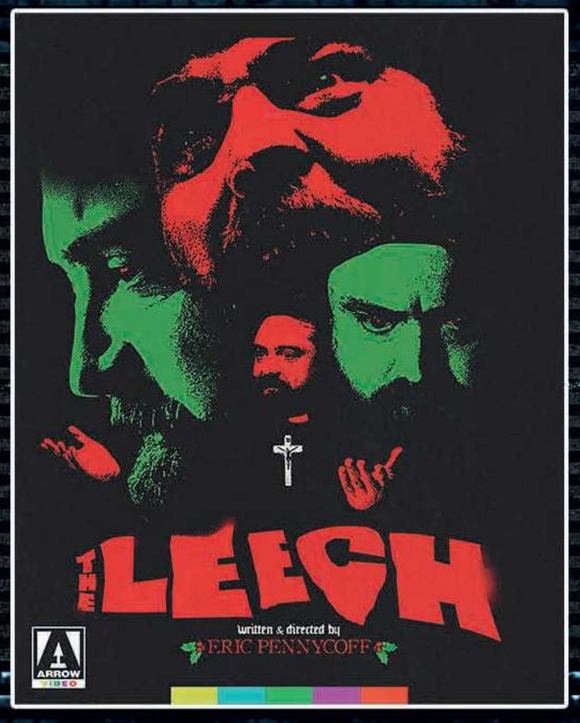
NEW YEAR

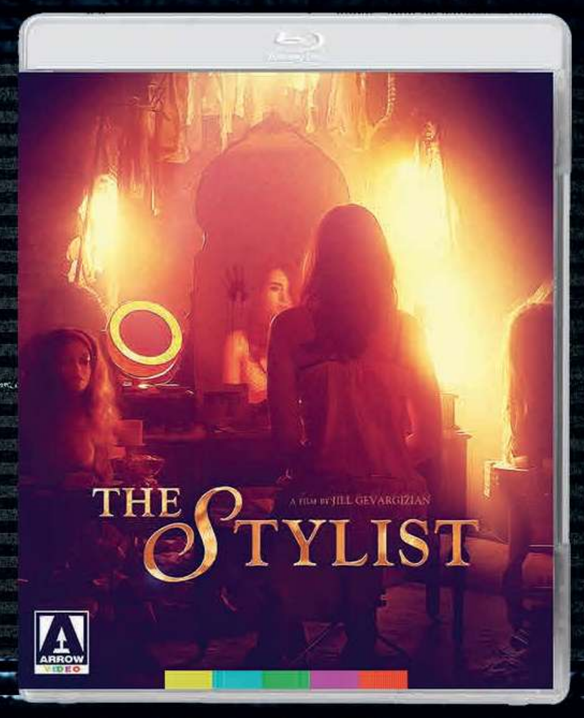
NEW CULT

If it's chills you seek, then step into a world of Arrow Video. Enjoy deluxe editions on Blu-ray and 4K UHD with brand new restorations, exclusive artworks and hours of extras. Featuring masterworks by Dario Argento, Clive Barker, Shinya Tsukamoto and many many more. All terrifyingly good.









WWW.ARROWVIDEO.COM